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**THE NEGROES OF AFRICA**





# THE NEGROES OF AFRICA

## HISTORY AND CULTURE

BY

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY

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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

This translation is a combination of two little books on the same subject by the same author, namely: *Les Noirs de L'Afrique* (The Negroes of Africa), published first in 1921, and *Civilizations Négro-Africaines* (African Negro Civilizations), which followed in 1925. The first is largely historical; the second entirely ethnological.

Those parts of the second that are not treated in the first or are supplementary to what is there given, namely some ninety pages or about three-fourths of the volume, have been interspersed at suitable places after Chapter VI of the first mentioned work. It has not been thought necessary to disturb the reader by the insertion of signs pointing to the seams. In fact I have allowed myself the addition of occasional introductory phrases in order to make the transition from one book to the other as unobtrusive as possible. But I have preferred frankly to admit a minimum of repetition rather than risk a mutilation of the text where the same explanations are made with equal lucidity in each book but differ somewhat in approach or in the amount of detail or illustration given.

I have chosen these two little books for the English-reading public, believing that for the student they will furnish an excellent introduction to the

sources and the growing monographic literature of the subject and for the enlightened public an attractive and reliable abstract of these sources and monographs, notwithstanding the fact that differences of opinion exist regarding certain details, as is pointed out from time to time in the footnotes.

But because of the omission or slight treatment of many interesting topics and peoples, I wish to call the attention of the zealous reviewer to the place of these little books in their original setting. They have no claim whatsoever to be treatises. Although written by an outstanding authority, they make part of two popular series for the general reader. *The Negroes of Africa* is Vol. 15 of COLLECTION PAYOT of which some fifty volumes have appeared.

*"The works of Collection Payot, due to the pen of the most eminent scholars, are designed to furnish in all subjects an initiation for young people, reading of ardent interest for the large cultivated public and a summary for the specialists themselves."*

*African Negro Civilizations* is Vol. 18 of LA CULTURE MODERNE (Librarie Stock).

*"This collection of works, concise, vivid and substantial, written by the best qualified scholars, will keep the public informed of contemporary intellectual activity in the domain of science, art and philosophy."*

And M. Delafosse himself says in the preface to *African Negro Civilizations*: "The object of this little book is to establish a sort of synthesis of what is common to all African Negro civilizations considered by themselves and in their real character, aside

from the alterations that have been brought about, in some regions, either by Mussulman or European influence. . . . It is the customs which are observed by all the African Negroes remaining within their ancestral frame that I have sought to trace here, with the aim of contributing to a more exact knowledge of their collective mentality and their institutions. I have thought in this way to render a service, not only to those who are interested in ethnography and sociology from a purely speculative point of view, but also and especially to those who, having to do with African populations, could not, without danger to themselves and the Negroes, remain ignorant of the profound life of the masses and the motives which make them act and think."

I also wish to call attention to the fact that the greater part of the first two chapters as well as some of the third is *avowedly hypothetical*. Nevertheless the reconstruction is not without interest as showing what the complexity of data suggests to the mind of one who has a deep and wide acquaintance with the country.

• • •

There has been considerable difficulty in Anglicizing the great mass of geographical and historical names, as there is no French-English geographical and historical dictionary and English works are strangely inconsistent in this matter. At the suggestion of Professor Labouret I have adopted the following plan, which is only an extension of the

principles of spelling already found here and there in English books on Africa:

*Ou* in French = *u* in English before consonants unless it would be long, but *w* before *e* and *a*, e.g., *Ouelle* = *Welle*, *Ouame* = *Wahm*, etc.

*Aou* in French = *How* in English, e.g., *Aoudaghost* = *Howdaghost*.

*Tch* in French = *ch* in English, as in *church*.

*Ch* in French = *sh* in many English versions.

*Dj* in French = *J* in English where it indicates the English sound of *j*. E.g., *Djouba* = *Juba* in English.

*Diou* in French = *Ju* in English, e.g., *Dioula* = *Jula* in English.

*Ss* in French = *s* in English, except in a few cases for phonetic requirements.

*Oi* in French = *oy* in English.

Diacritical marks have generally been omitted for the sake of simplicity.

The great wealth of names need not bother the general reader for he can skip them at the same time that he is impressed by the number of divisions and groups. For the specialized reader they may offer handy bench-marks.

I have thought it useful to add a special bibliography of the more important works of M. Delafosse and thank the *Secrétaire Perpétuel of the Académie des Sciences Coloniales* for permission to reprint the one published by Professor Labouret in *Tome 8* of the *Compte Rendu* of the Academy.

For the permission to combine these two little books for an English translation, I have to thank the late Madame Maurice Delafosse.

I also wish to thank several friends for helping me

with the translation; Mademoiselle Marguerite Donzé of Paris for explaining certain idiomatic expressions, and Miss Irma Brink of the American Library in Paris for insisting on the Anglicizing of numerous Gallicisms (in the volume *The Negroes of Africa*), of which I had become enamored because of their conciseness, picturesqueness and gentle humor, and also for settling certain questions of punctuation. But as we did not always agree, all the responsibility falls on the translator.

Special thanks are due Professor Henri Labouret for his graciousness and patience in listening to the manuscript translation, for suggesting more happy transcriptions in several places, for solving the problem of Anglicizing the historical and geographical names because of his wide knowledge of English sources and also for consenting to write an introduction for the English edition. This will be especially interesting for the reader, as M. Labouret, who was a student and friend of M. Delafosse, succeeding him on the various faculties of the University of Paris, has lived eighteen years among the natives of Africa in nearly all the places where M. Delafosse served before him.

At the last minute four chapters were added from a third book by M. Delafosse, namely, *Les Nègres* (The Negroes), Paris, 1927, which is No. 4 of the *Bibliothèque Générale Illustrée*, published by Rieder. These chapters are Introduction, Morality, Literature, Art.

February, 1931.

THE TRANSLATOR.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Words in [ ] signify translator's note.



## BIBLIOGRAPHIES<sup>1</sup>

For each chapter there will be mentioned some of the works treating specially or incidentally of the questions which have been made the object of the chapter. Authors are cited without any partiality; several among them have developed ideas which do not accord entirely with or even differ notably from those which will be put forth in the present work. Of course, each list is far from being exhaustive. [Bibliographies on special subjects as well as reviews of current books and reports of research work are to be found in *Africa, Journal of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures*, Oxford University Press, London. Vol. 1, No. 1, Jan., 1928.]

<sup>1</sup> [The names of classical authors well known in English have been Anglicized even though the titles of their books have been left in French for it was the French translation that is referred to, for example: Strabo instead of French, *Strabon*; Herodotus instead of *Hérodote*, Pliny the Elder for *Pliny l'Ancien*, Josephus for *Josèphe*, Ptolemy for *Ptolémée*. But Arabic names have been kept in the French transcription in the Bibliographies, though Anglicized in the text, because I have not had the opportunity of knowing whether English translations of their works exist.]

## PREFACE

**Maurice Delafosse**, who died in 1926 at the age of 56 years, was considered as the scholar best acquainted with the peoples and languages of West Africa. He had spent nearly seventeen years in that country which he never ceased to study with the most scrupulous attention.

His administrative functions called him successively to the Ivory Coast, the Republic of Liberia, the frontiers of the Ivory Coast, the Sudan and the Upper Volta, then to the Sudan and at last to Senegal. In each of the positions that he occupied, he gathered observations of the first importance which furnished the material of numerous volumes published during his lifetime.

At first African linguistics attracted his attention. Hardly graduated from the *Ecole des Langues Orientales Vivantes* (School of Living Oriental Languages), in 1894 he brought out his first work, a "*Manuel Dahoméen*," then successively, studies on the languages of the Sara, the Agni, the Hausa and the Mandingo. He gathered unpublished vocabularies of more than sixty languages or dialects spoken on the Ivory Coast and in the neighboring countries, thus laying the foundations of an analytical classification of the speech of this region.

Although M. Delafosse had never ceased to be ac-

tively occupied with linguistics, after 1909 he showed a more and more marked interest in African ethnology and history. Of this latter domain he demonstrated his mastery by the publication in 1912 of "Haut-Sénégal-Niger," a work of first importance containing the most exact and most complete account of the events which took place in the empires of Ghana, of Mali or Melli, and of Songhoy. M. Delafosse was greatly aided in this type of research by his knowledge of Arabic and the discovery of the *Tarikh-el Fettâch*, an important historical account continuing the *Tarikh-es-Sudan*, which he translated in collaboration with Professor Houdas and which threw light on a great number of points remaining obscure until then.

These accounts, combined with local traditions, permitted M. Delafosse to write the history of the divers Sudanese hegemonies which asserted their power in the Middle Ages and maintained themselves with varying fortunes until the end of the sixteenth century.

The composition of this book alone would suffice to justify the reputation of the author. But he has other claims to recognition, for he has greatly contributed to the extension and the precision of our ethnological knowledge relating to West Africa and to a deeper understanding of the natives who inhabit this country.

Notwithstanding these important works, M. Delafosse did not abandon linguistics, and we owe to him numerous memoranda and articles on African Negro dialects. From the very beginning of his

career as a scholar, he was preoccupied with a classification of these languages on which he worked all his life and which he did not present in its final form until 1924.

Honorary Governor of the Colonies, M. Delafosse was also professor at the Ecole Coloniale and the Ecole des Langues Orientales Vivantes at Paris. Besides this he was Vice-President of the Linguistic Society, General Secretary of the French Society of Ethnology, and was a member of the International Colonial Institute in Brussels. The French government appointed him a member of the Superior Council of the Colonies and its representative at Geneva in 1923 when the preparatory Commission met whose work resulted in the Convention relative to slavery.

For some years his penetrating mind had understood the necessity of interesting the public in the colonies and the populations which inhabit them. At first he undertook this task by means of articles in the press and published works of popularization, conceived on a scientific plan but presented in a simple form, attractive and accessible to all.

*The Negroes of Africa* and *African Negro Civilizations*, here combined into a single volume and translated with great care, answer this purpose. They present an interesting and exact statement of our ethnological knowledge about this part of the world, and it is probable that this study will remain fundamental for many years to come.

These two works sum up the opinions that M. Delafosse had formed at the end of his life. They

attempt to give an impression of what Africa has been in the past and to show the institutions, the beliefs, the arts and the present aptitudes of a race as yet scarcely known. The opinions of a scholar universally appreciated merit attention. They come, in fact, from a man who has not limited himself to imagining theoretical considerations, but who has grounded himself, before writing, on observations made on the spot and during long years among thousands of natives.

Nevertheless, in reading the work that is here submitted to him, the English reader must not lose sight of the fact that this book, written for a French public, refers especially to phenomena pertaining to the French possessions and cites, in preference, examples taken from these regions.

It is thus that M. Delafosse, wishing to set forth the organization, functioning and ceremonial of a Negro State has chosen for demonstration the Mossi kingdom of the Upper Volta instead of describing that of the Basuta of South Africa or that of the Ashanti of the Gold Coast.

For the same reasons, what he advances on the subject of age-classes and politico-religious associations, which generally among the African tribes group the entire masculine and feminine population according to a certain hierarchy, relates rather to what he himself has observed in West Africa.

It does not seem that there are any great disadvantages in this method, for the Negro race presents a remarkable unity from one end of the continent to the other, a type of life and organization imposed by

various milieus, so much so that what is true for a region of the North or the West is usually so also for the corresponding country in the South or the East.

However, notwithstanding the exactitude and excellence of the book, certain points relative to totemism and the interpretation of several religious beliefs are open to discussion. M. Delafosse has never met, he claims, true and indisputable totemism in the course of his investigations in Africa, and he assures us that this phenomenon does not exist anywhere there, at least in its American form. He was doubtless correct in contesting certain facts not properly observed, for instance, those relative to the crocodiles of the Niger near Bamako and the serpents of Widah in Dahomey, but he was perhaps wrong in putting aside other information coming from informed and conscientious observers which seems to prove the existence of totemism in certain regions, notably among the Fan of the Equatorial zone. Yet it must be recognized for the exoneration of M. Delafosse that the phenomena described differ from those that we are in the habit of considering elsewhere as typical, and we must doubtless admit that the totemism of Africa is of a very particular and special type.

On the other hand the demonstration of African Negro animism, based on the explanation of the properties of the *nia* and of the *dia* taken as examples, is not convincing, although it has been admitted without discussion by certain authors, Monteil and Tauxier among others, who have con-

cerned themselves with the Mandingo from whose language these terms have been borrowed.

At all times the notion of soul has been difficult to define and it is not easy to know what it is for the Africans. Certain observers even suppose that this concept does not even exist among the individuals arbitrarily called primitive; others assure us, on the contrary, that every Negro believes himself to possess several of them whose appellations are no better known than their rôle.

For M. Delafosse, the *nia* seems to be a kind of soul and this word would signify exactly "personal life"; it is born at the moment that the human being or animal is conceived, it exists equally in every tree, every stone, every natural phenomenon. The *nia* of animated beings continues to exist after their death and becomes a redoubtable power, whose wrath one seeks to avoid by offerings. Thus the cult rendered everywhere to the dead would be explained.

Besides this, there is in living beings another essential principle, the *dia*, a sort of vital breath, an impersonal fluid, without thought, without will, without independent force, but whose presence is necessary in order that life be manifested within the body.

These explanations do not seem to be in accord with the ideas of the natives such as one can discern them by the light of their own declarations and the linguistic facts. First of all, the Mandingo, far from imagining the *dia* (or better *dya*) as an impersonal fluid, without thought and without will, consider it as an immaterial double of the individual,

animating the body of the latter and sometimes abandoning the envelope which serves it as an habitual dwelling-place in order to run about on adventures, especially during sleep, which supposes intelligence and will. It is then often a prey to witchcraft, to the enterprise and the violence of sorcerers, who can capture it, wound it, kill it and eat it. In this case the body soon dies. Let us note that we are not dealing here with the actions and reactions of what certain authors call the "dream-soul," that is to say, of a special category of souls, but indeed with the same principle of *dia* or *dya* of which we have been speaking.

I do not think that this word can be connected, as M. Delafosse assures us, with the monosyllabic root *di* signifying at the same time: to be gentle, easy, agreeable, and also gentleness, facility, pleasure, when to this same root is added the suffix *ya*, a current usage in Mandingo for the formation of certain qualitative substantives, thus permitting the reading *diya* and not *dia*. Now the term in question is certainly *dia* or rather *dya* pronounced with an occlusive, deep-toned media-palatal consonant. In the mind of the natives here considered, it applies to an element susceptible of emotion, and from all evidence, without the concurrence of what M. Delafosse calls *nia*. Numerous expressions prove this: *dya geleya*, to reassure, calm, soothe the *dya*; *dya uli*, *dya sira*, *dya tike*, all synonymous, indicating the action of frightening the *dya*.

As for the *nia* or *nya* there are strong presumptions for believing that it could never be given the



sense of "soul or personal life." The Mandingo, in fact, employ a special term, fairly different, for expressing this double idea which is *ni*.

The conception of these natives and the greater part of those observed by me during the years that I spent in West Africa seems to be the following: the human being is composed of a carnal body, serving as an envelope to a fluidlike body, transforming itself after death into a specter which is able to inhabit the country of the dead or else reincarnate itself in a new-born person.

Is this saying that the *nia* described by M. Delafosse as a dangerous force does not exist? The term is inexact in form, but the notion is proved by observation.

Let us remark that in the first place, one should not speak of *nia* but of *gnama*. M. Delafosse had, at first, admitted the latter reading in his works; he then considered that "*niama*, a dynamic and efficient spirit, can be the spirit of a genie, an ancestor, a sacred object, an animal, a mountain, a stone." Later, led on by the apparent analogy of the roots *nia* and *ni*, he abandoned the term *niama* or *gnama* to adopt *nia* and gave to it the explanation reported above.

The Mandingo natives themselves employ the word *gnama* to designate not a personal fluid but a special force, something efficient and in any case evil, which is neither general nor universal, but, on the contrary, peculiar to certain individuals, certain animals, certain places, certain objects, certain gods, the approximate list of which could be drawn up.

I may add that in numerous African languages there exist, from all evidence, terms corresponding to the Mandingo *niama* or *gnama* and covering the same idea. To my mind, these terms cannot be connected with the notion of soul.

Such are the principal observations to be formulated regarding the work of M. Delafosse. In spite of certain criticisms of detail that could be made, it constitutes an extremely interesting synthesis of African history and ethnology. No similar work seems to have been attempted as yet in France where it has been keenly appreciated; I have no doubt that the same will be true abroad.

H. LABOURET,

*Professor at the École des Langues Orientales  
Vivantes and the École Coloniale.*

PARIS, June, 1928.



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## INTRODUCTION

### *How Little We Know of the Negroes*

It is not a very long time that we know the Negroes and even now we do not know them well.

The few phrases that can be gleaned here and there about them from the inscriptions on buildings and monuments of nearer Asia and Egypt are reduced to some enumerations of Negro slaves captured or given over as tribute, accompanied, sometimes, by a summary description of the physical characteristics and costumes of these unfortunate creatures, a description completed by a few bas-reliefs and mural paintings. As for the works of classic antiquity, there is only mention of the Negroes enrolled in the armies of the Mediterranean peoples or making up the unfree domestic servants of a few rich families of Greece and Rome: they give no more information as to the life of the Negroes then living freely in Africa than would a sketch of the slaves transported to America or of the Senegalese soldiers stationed in France tell us of the autochthonous institutions of the more contemporaneous Negroes.

Such is the passage in which Herodotus described, with a few lines, the accouterment and equipment of the Negro contingent of the army of Xerxes, which was formed by "Ethiopians inhabiting the



country beyond Egypt'' and placed under the orders of Arsames, son of Darius and Artystone.

Such is again the celebrated portrait of the Negroes traced by the Greek physician Galen, according to whom they were distinguished by ten principal characteristics: frizzled hair, thinness of beard, wide nostrils, thick lips, powerful teeth, odor of the skin, black hue, spread-out toes, length of the sex organ and finally a propensity for noisy hilarity. The part of this picture that concerns the physical aspect of the Negroes is exact enough: for one thing, it is within the domain of Galen's speciality, which was anatomy. Furthermore, servitude does not modify anthropological characteristics, so that the slaves that were to be observed by the learned successor and contradictor of Hippocrates certainly did not differ, from the point of view of exterior peculiarities, from the Negroes living freely in Africa, either at his time or at present. As for the part relating to temperament, it does not conform to reality except as applied to the few Negroes that Galen encountered, that is to say, people whose easy and noisy hilarity is a manifestation of a sort of foolishness produced by exile and captivity; the same character has been attributed to the Negroes of America: it is much less general and much less striking among the Negroes of Africa.

As the Negroes of antiquity have left no written annals or, if they have left them, they are still to be discovered, the Europeans had only a meager knowledge of them, bequeathed by the Greeks and

*Latins*, the day when, for the first time, they entered into contact with the maritime banks of tropical Africa. Now this event is no older than the fourteenth century of our era.

Doubtless, curiosity led the ancient navigators to make observations which, though naïve, were none the less quite frequently attentive and conscientious.

Unfortunately, many of these explorers did not know how to write or experienced a certain hesitation in doing so. Many did not care to divulge the secrets of their distant and adventurous traffic, fearing the appearance of competitors. Very few of the observations made by them reached the public who, moreover, were not ardent readers.

A reaction inevitably set in from the moment when, furrowed from North to South and from East to West by the fine scientific explorations of the nineteenth century and occupied little by little from the coast to the center by the colonizing nations, Negro Africa revealed one by one its mysteries and its secrets. But like all rapid reactions, it overstepped the mark. In perceiving that the Negroes were not such as had been imagined, the difference between the legend and the reality was unconsciously exaggerated. Minds insufficiently matter-of-fact and, moreover, badly informed, made of them sort of idyllic beings and of their country a reproduction of the terrestrial paradise. In order to protest against this equally false representation, the shadows of the picture were now too greatly accentuated and a portrait of African Negroes was drawn in which they appeared in the form of brutes

who differed little from the apes, more stupid perhaps and more savage, but also as ridiculous.

However, another opinion arose, more sensible in appearance, in any case less unjust, and starting from a better temper, which was not long in rallying the majority of suffrages and which still prevails to-day. It consists in regarding the Negroes with a smiling indulgence and saying: "They are only big children." Perhaps those concerned, if they were to give their opinion, would not be more satisfied with this pitying condescension than they are with the haughty disdain of those who consider them inferior beings; undoubtedly they would prefer justice to pity.

However that be, this definition appears from the very beginning a little too simple and easy. On close examination we find that it is not at all exact and that, like the former theories, it has the serious defect of being based upon a subjective conception. When it is said that the Negroes are big children, it is meant that they are adults with a puerile mentality, and it is implied that the mentality to which theirs is compared is that of our own children: in this we fall into the usual error of judging others according to ourselves. It is, if you will, a comparative definition, based on more or less superficial analogies, not on the facts considered in themselves.

It is vitiated at the start because it begs the question. We suppose *a priori* that our race presents the true pattern of civilization as such, but that it arrived at this state by the activity of its adults, and

we are content to accord to the black race a footing of equality with ours, on condition that they be put on the same rank as our children, that is to say, of those among us to whom we refuse the capacity of attaining the level of the mass. It proclaims in *pleasanter*, but not less absolute terms, the same inferiority of the colored races, sustained with more acrimony, if not more logic, in any case with less hypocrisy, by Gobineau and his school.

That the Negroes of Africa are at present, in general, children with respect to the majority of European peoples of our time, may be conceded, though it would be easy to find exceptions on both sides. But they are not abnormal children, in other words, children whose growth has been arrested by a constitutional defect. Children, if you will, but children who can grow and who are growing, without being distinguished in this from other parts of humanity.

The weakness of this expression, "big children," was soon felt and, to replace it, the word "backward" was risked, then the choice fell to "retarded," which seems less derogatory. Of course it is always by comparison with ourselves that the Negroes are called retarded.

In what way is it true?

From the point of view of material civilization, there does not seem to be any doubt. Again we must put aside, as constituting the exceptions mentioned above and not valid subjects of comparison, certain populations of contemporary Europe who have made very little progress in this line since the time

of Xerxes; in this they are as retarded as, if not more than the Negroes who, during the same period, have exchanged the skins of wild animals for the elegant and sometimes sumptuous costume of the Sudan and arrows of chipped flint for firearms. But if many of the Negro tribes of our time singularly resemble what we have a right to imagine they were several centuries B.C., and if others, although having made undeniable and appreciable progress, are certainly less advanced than most of the peoples of Europe in the domain of agriculture and industry, it is not difficult to perceive the reason, without having recourse to the argument of congenital inferiority. The Negroes of Africa, isolated from that Mediterranean lake which, during millenniums, has been the only vehicle of world civilization, were not able, in the absence of the emulation created by constant contacts with the outside world, to progress in a way that was possible, for example, in the case of the Gauls under the influence of Roman civilization. For the Sahara, if it constituted a bridge for ideas that need only a few persons to transport and diffuse them, has probably been a difficult barrier when it came to material culture.

If we now pass to the intellectual domain, two things strike us from the very first with regard to the Negroes: on the one hand, a widespread ignorance; on the other, a collective mentality that confuses us and suggests to even the best informed sociologists, the mentality of early man. But here, again, one must not exaggerate nor generalize too far.

The ignorance of many Negro populations is not notably more accentuated than that of many rural populations of Europe. On the contrary, others, either under the influence of Mussulman or Christian education—religious or lay—have attained a degree of learning and culture that is not to be scoffed at. In this respect, the same differences separating urban and peasant society, from the point of view of intellectual development and its manifestations, are to be observed in Africa and in Europe. Let us not forget that systems of writing that are entirely original have been invented of whole cloth aside from all exterior influence by some Negro populations of Africa: we know of at least two, that of the Vai of the Guinea coast and that of the Bamoun or Bamom of the central Cameroons. Perhaps there are still others. The fact deserves to be emphasized all the more so since, if white people of a Semitic race have taught us the art of writing, no alphabet has yet been discovered that is due to that Indo-European race to which we are so proud to belong.

As for the analogies that have been remarked between African Negro and primitive mentality they are an evident sign of the way that still remains to be covered by the Negroes on the ladder that leads to the summits of humanity. Nevertheless, these analogies spring, not from the special character of their race, since our own ancestors had the same mentality and many of us are not very far from it at the present hour, but from the environment in which they have developed up to the present and

from the general ignorance that is only a result of this environment.

From the moral point of view, are the African Negroes retarded with respect to us? The question is very delicate and I will not venture, in any case, to decide it brutally in the affirmative. Undoubtedly certain customs still subsist here and there among them that we consider horrible vestiges of cruel barbarism. But, without going back to our ancestors, the Celts, who were not ignorant of human sacrifices, have we a right to affirm that a civilization that tolerates and even exalts warfare is at a higher moral level than one that tolerates and even exalts the immolation of human victims to appease a divinity? I will not speak of slavery, for in this respect Europeans have been, not so very long ago, more cruel and barbarous than the Negro peoples have ever shown themselves in their own autochthonous customs.

As for, political institutions, the gravest reproach that has been made regarding those of the Negroes, which are otherwise often ingenious, is lack of stability, as their statesmen have been accused of lacking in constancy. But in all sincerity, are we any better off in this respect?

It is from the social point of view especially that the Negroes give the impression of lagging behind us. They are still in the period of integral collectivism, known to our ancestors before the Middle Ages, while we have arrived at individualism. The question which presents itself is to know whether indeed we have made definitive progress in this line,

since many of our thinkers, of the so-called advance guard demand, as a benefit, the return to collectivism, although of a somewhat different form. This proves that the peoples of Negro Africa have not marched at the same rate of speed as the peoples of Europe, but in nowise proves that the former are inferior to the latter. Who knows, indeed, whether the latter have not gone too fast?

But why lose time in always comparing the Blacks and the Whites, the Africans and the Europeans? It is a vain task without possible results unless it be accomplished by an impartial observer, a condition that cannot be fulfilled unless one belongs to neither the black nor the white race, unless he be neither African nor European. Is it not more interesting to consider in itself the object of our study and to limit ourselves to finding out, if we can, what the Negroes have been in the past, according to what they have done, and what they are in the present, according to what they are doing?

To proceed otherwise would be to continue indefinitely to speak of a people we do not know.





# THE NEGROES OF AFRICA

## HISTORY AND CULTURE

### CHAPTER I

#### ORIGINS AND PREHISTORY

AIM AND OBJECT OF THIS BOOK—ORIGIN OF THE NEGRO PEOPLES OF AFRICA — HYPOTHETICAL LEMURIA AND OCEANIC MIGRATIONS—AUTOCHTHONOUS AFRICANS: NEGRILOS AND NEGROES — PEOPLING OF AFRICA — THE NEGROES OF AFRICA AT THE TIME OF HERODOTUS

#### *Aim and Object of This Book*

The aim of this book is to furnish a general view of the history, the civilizations, and the material, intellectual and social character of the Negro race which inhabits the African continent.

There will be no question, therefore, of the peoples of the white race who, either in antiquity or since, have played such an important rôle in the development of North Africa, and whom we find to-day, more or less mixed and transformed, scattered from the Red Sea to the Atlantic Ocean and from the shores of the Mediterranean to the southern limits of the Sahara: ancient and modern Egyptians, Phœnician and Punic peoples, Libyans or Berbers, Arabs and Moors. More precisely, no mention will be made of them except in the measure of their influence on the progress of Negro societies, an influence

which has often been considerable and which could not be too much emphasized.

For the same reason, there will be no study, except incidentally, of the peoples who, however dark their pigmentation has become as the result of secular and repeated crossing with the Negroes, are nevertheless considered as belonging either to the Semitic branch of the white race, for example, the principal portion of the Abyssinians, or to an Indonesian branch of the yellow race, such as many of the Malagasy tribes. Moreover, the island of Madagascar is outside the geographical limits which I have assigned to myself.

On the other hand there are African populations which can claim, in part at least, non-Negro ancestry but who are in some way incorporated into the Negro race and into Negro society: such peoples will find a place in this study. I will be content for the moment with citing from among them the Fulani of the Sudan, the Hottentots of South Africa and a certain number of more or less hybrid tribes of East Africa which are commonly called, without much reason, Hamitic or Chamitic.

### *Origin of the Negro Peoples of Africa*

The object of the present work being thus defined, we must now begin by seeking to find out whence came the African Negroes. But is it possible to commit oneself as to their first origin? It seems that the actual state of our knowledge does not permit us, as yet, to answer this question in a definitive or even a satisfactory manner.

Doubtless one would not have even asked the question if Africa were the only part of the world to possess Negroes. But such is not the case and without speaking, of course, of the countries where the advent of the Negro race has taken place only at a recent epoch, as the result of migrations which were generally involuntary and whose genesis and circumstances are known, as in America, we know that the reputed autochthonous inhabitants of lands far removed from Africa and separated from it by the entire width of the Indian Ocean are considered as belonging to the Negro race for the same reasons as are the Negroes of Mozambique and of Guinea.

*Hypothetical Lemuria*

If the natives of Australia, of Papua and of the Melanesian islands are to be ranked in the same human category as the African Negroes, it may be reasonably asked if the first came from Africa or the second from Oceania, or indeed, if one and the other had not in the first ages of the world a common habitat on some hypothetical continent, now disappeared, situated between Africa and the Oceanian archipelagoes but having formerly constituted a connection and a passage between them. This continent, the supposed cradle of the Negro race, has its partisans, like that other one which certain people claim to have anciently existed between the present Europe and the American seas; it has even received a name, Lemuria, as the other has been called Atlantis, and we are shown its remains, represented by Madagasear, the Mascarenes and a number of islands

of various sizes, just as the Canaries and the Azores are regarded as the débris of the ancient Atlantis.

The existence of Lemuria remains problematical. Even if it were proved it may be that this continent had already disappeared from the face of the globe before the appearance of the first man. Moreover, there is no need to have recourse to such an hypothesis in order to justify the theory according to which the African Negroes come from Oceania. We know to-day with certainty that a very important portion of the population of the island of Madagascar came originally from Indonesia and it seems well demonstrated that, for a part at least, the migration took place at an epoch when there were no more facilities of communication than exist to-day between Oceania and Madagascar and that the migrations alluded to took place by sea. One will object, it is true, that some one and a half million Malagasy of the Indonesian race should be put on a parallel with the 150 millions of Africans of the Negro race. But this latter figure has not been reached in a day and it is permissible to suppose that migrations, comparable in total importance to those which have brought the Malays and other Oceanians to Madagascar, but having taken place thousands of years previously, had also imported to Africa a Negro element of sufficient numbers who, afterwards multiplying in the new habitat, from millennium to millennium, and amalgamating with autochthonous elements, arrived in the long run at the above figure, which is only roughly approximate.

*Oceanic Migrations*

In principle, there could be no opposition to the proposal that the current of population had flowed in an inverse direction and that the Negroes of Melanesia should be considered as of African origin. But an attentive examination of native traditions tends to favor the first of the two hypotheses. However vague these traditions, whatever their apparent incoherence and with whatever highly supernatural garments they have been clothed by the imagination and the superstition of the Negroes, they strike the most biased mind by their concordance and lead one to think that, once disengaged from their accessories, they possess a basis of truth.

All the Negro tribes of Africa claim that their first ancestors came from the East. Of course migrations have taken place in all directions; but, if we analyze methodically all the circumstances of which we have knowledge, we ascertain that the movements in any other direction than to the West took place as the result of local wars, epidemics, droughts, and always at an epoch later than that at which the particular group dates the beginning of its history. If we push to their last retrenchments the natives whom we interrogate, they invariably show us the rising sun as representing the point whence departed their most ancient patriarch.

It appears then, that one may, until proof to the contrary be forthcoming, admit as established the theory according to which the Negroes of Africa are not, properly speaking, autochthonous, but come

from migrations having their point of departure towards the limits of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific. It is better to abstain from specifying the precise epoch or epochs of these migrations. All that we are permitted to affirm is that, when the existence of the African Negroes was revealed for the first time to the ancient peoples of the Orient and of the Mediterranean, they already occupied, and doubtless for a very long time, about the same regions in which we find them in our day and they appear to have lost since that time the precise remembrance of their original habitat.

*Autochthonous Africans*

Who were then the people inhabiting the African continent before the Negroes, whom the latter found there at the moment of their arrival? And what has become of them?

Here again we are reduced to *suppositions*.<sup>1</sup> However, they can be supported by some facts, though of an altogether relative certitude, some furnished by local traditions, others by the accounts of ancient authors and the observations of modern travelers, and still others by the works of prehistorians and anthropologists.

These latter have scientifically demonstrated that the dwarfs or pygmies, who have been pointed out at all times in certain regions of Africa, belong to a human race distinct from the Negro. Not only are they lighter in color and slighter in build than the generality of Negroes, but they are differen-

<sup>1</sup> Translator's italics.

tiated from them by a number of other physical characteristics, notably by the more disproportionate relation of the respective dimensions of the head, the trunk and the limbs. Scientists refuse to call *them* "dwarfs," a term which is suitable rather to exceptional individuals in a given race and not to the whole of a race; they reject the term "pygmies," which represents to our mind an extremely small stature as an essential and predominant characteristic, because the men in question, although rarely exceeding 1 m. 55 [61 inches], are not generally shorter than 1 m. 40 [about 55 inches]. They have been given the name of "Negrillos."

At present, the number of Negrillos relatively free from all crossing is not considerable in Africa. They are met, however, in a dispersed state, in the forests of the Gabon and the Congo, in the valleys of the high affluents of the Nile and in other portions of Equatorial Africa. Farther south, under the name of Hottentots or Bushmen,<sup>1</sup> that is to say, "men of the bush," they form more compact groupings. Elsewhere, particularly on the Gulf of Guinea, many travelers have pointed out the presence of tribes of a light color, a well developed head, an abundant hairy system, which seem to come from a relatively recent crossing between Negroes and Negrillos, sometimes with a predominance of the latter element. It seems very certain that these are the remains, destined to diminish from century to

<sup>1</sup> [It ought, perhaps, to be pointed out that many authorities would object to classifying Bushmen and Hottentots with the African Negrillos.]



century and perhaps one day totally to disappear, of a population which was formerly much more extensive.

There is no accord as to the point which marked the terminus of the famous voyage accomplished in the sixth century B.C. by the Carthaginian general Hanno along the West Coast of Africa. Extreme estimates place it at furthest in the neighborhood of the island of Sherbro, between Sierra-Leone and Monrovia, but the more rigorous not far from the mouth of the Gambia. However it be, this hardy navigator terminated his so-called periplus in a region where Negrillos are to-day no longer found, but where they still existed in his time. For it is impossible not to identify with the Negrillos that we know, whose arboreal habits have been mentioned by all who have studied them, those little hairy creatures similar to men and living in trees, described by Hanno towards the end of his voyage out and called *gorii* by his interpreter. Of this word, at least as it has come to us from the pen of Greek and Latin authors who have revealed to us the adventures of Hanno, we have made "gorilla"; we have applied it to a species of anthropomorphous apes, which are not met with, at least in our day, except very much to the south of the southernmost point that was attained by the Carthaginian general, and we have supposed that the little hairy creatures resembling men, which this navigator mentions, were gorillas, without considering that the gorilla, even seen from a distance, has in no wise the aspect of a little man, but indeed much more that of a giant.

Perhaps it is not presumptuous to recall that *gorii* or *gor-yi*, in the mouth of a Wolof of Senegal, corresponds exactly to our expression "these are men" and to suggest that Hanno's interpreter, probably hired on the Senegalese coast, spoke the language that is still employed there in our day.

In the following century, the Persian Sataspe, condemned to go around Africa in order to escape the death penalty pronounced against him, crossed the Strait of Gibraltar and took sail during many months in the direction of the south. He could not complete his *periplus* and, on his return to the court of Xerxes, was crucified by the king's order. Before dying he recounted that, on the farthestmost coast seen by him, he had perceived "little men," clothed in garments made of the palm tree, who had abandoned their cities and fled to the mountains as soon as they saw him approaching. These little men were very probably Negrillos, but we cannot know at what point of the western coast of Africa Sataspe met them. The story is told by Herodotus (Book IV, § XLIII).

About the same epoch, probably about the year 450 B.C., the presence of Negrillos in the northern part of the country of the Negroes was noted by the same historian. He reports in Book II of his work (§ XXXII) that some young Nasamonians inhabiting Syrte, that is to say, the province situated between the present Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, traversed, as a wager, the Libyan desert and attained, at the other side of a vast extent of sand, a plain where there were trees and which was separated by

marshes from a city watered by a great river containing crocodiles; the inhabitants of this plain and of this city were little men of dark color, of a stature below the medium, who did not understand the Libyan language. Some have wanted to identify the "great river" mentioned by Herodotus as the Niger, others have seen in it Lake Chad, still others, an arm or a western tributary of the Nile. However that be, the Nasamonians had met the Negrillos at the southern limits of the Sahara, that is, at the north of a zone beyond which this race no longer exists in our day.

Native traditions clarify the question with a ray of light that is not altogether negligible, almost permitting us to pass from the domain of simple conjectures to that of probabilities.

Everywhere, but principally in the countries where the Negrillos have already disappeared for a long time, the Negroes considered as the most ancient inhabitants of the soil say that this land does not really belong to them and that, when their distant ancestors, coming from the East, established themselves there, they found it in possession of little men of reddish tint and large heads who were the veritable autochthones and who had by means of certain treaties, accorded to the first Negroes arriving on a given piece of land the authorization to use and cultivate it. In the course of time these little men have disappeared but the memory of them has remained fairly vivid. Generally they have been deified and identified with the gods or genii of the soil, the forest, the mountains, great trees, stones

and waters; often it is claimed that they live in certain species of animals having strange customs, such as the lamantin and varieties of little antelopes (*Limnotragus Gratus* and *Hyæmoschus Aquaticus*). Sometimes, as among the Mandingo, the same word (*man* or *mâ*) serves to designate these antelopes, the lamantin, the genii of the bush, the legendary little red men, and signifies equally "ancestor" and "master" and more particularly "master of the soil." Thus the traditions of the natives tend to prove that the Negrillos preceded the Negroes on African soil and recognize the former's suzerain rights to the land, rights which the present occupants consider themselves to be only the precarious holders and usufructuaries.

In the absence of all certitude in this regard, it seems then that we should be permitted to suppose that the habitat of the African Negroes was originally peopled by Negrillos. Their domain probably did not extend much beyond the limits of what to-day constitutes in Africa the domain of the Negroes; however, it might have been prolonged a little more in the direction of the North, covering at least the southern part of the Sahara, which was doubtless less arid than it has since become, possessing, perhaps, rivers which in the course of centuries have dried up or been transformed into subterranean waters. It is probable that North Africa, very different already from the rest of the continent and in closer contact with Mediterranean Europe than with Central and South Africa, was inhabited by another race of men.

According to all probability, the Negrillos of the epoch anterior to the coming of the Negroes into Africa were hunters and fishermen, living in a semi-nomadic state suitable to people given exclusively to hunting and fishing. Their customs were probably similar to those of the Negrillos who still exist at the present hour, and doubtless, like these, they spoke languages which were half isolating, half agglutinating, characterized, from the phonetic point of view, by the phenomenon of "clicks"<sup>1</sup> and by the employment of musical tones. The great trees of the forest, grottoes of the mountains, rock shelters, huts of branches or of bark, lake dwellings constructed on piles might have served them, according to the region, for more or less temporary habitations. Perhaps they were given to the industry of chipping or of polishing stones and it might be proper to attribute to them the hatchets, arrow-heads, scrapers and numerous instruments of stone that are found nearly everywhere in contemporary Negro Africa and which the present Negroes, who are ignorant of their origin, consider as stones fallen from the skies and as material traces left by the thunder. It is possible again without being permitted the formulation of definitive affirmations, that the Negrillos knew only chipped stone, while their prehistoric neighbors of North Africa had already arrived at the art of polished stone.

<sup>1</sup> A "click" is a sound produced by the play of the organs of speech accompanied by an *inspiration* of air instead of an *expiration*.

*Peopling of Africa*

Then came the first Negroes, who reached the African continent by the South-East. They also must have been nomads or semi-nomads and hunters, principally because they were in a period of migration and were looking for territories in which to establish themselves, being obliged, in the course of their continual displacements, to nourish themselves with game; but they had almost certainly a tendency to be sedentary and to cultivate the soil as soon as they found favorable ground and could install themselves upon it. It is probable that they practiced the industry of polishing stone, be it that they had imported it or that they had later borrowed it from the autochthones of the North during the time that they had been in contact with them, or finally, that they had perfected the processes of the Negrillos. They must have possessed fairly pronounced artistic aptitudes and a strong religious impregnation. Perhaps it is to them that one must attribute the stone monuments that have been discovered in various regions of Negro Africa, monuments which have so much puzzled Africanists and whose origin remains a mystery, such as the edifices of Zimbabwe in Rhodesia and those raised stones and carved rocks of Gambia in which traces of a sun cult are considered to be revealed. They probably spoke languages employing prefixes, in which the names of various categories of beings or objects were divided into distinct grammatical classes.

Filtering themselves through the Negrillos with-

out really mixing with them, they must have seized all the grounds which were then unoccupied. When they could not do this, either because there were no available lands or because of the resistance of the Negrillos, they pushed back the latter and installed themselves in their place, driving these Negrillos toward the desert regions, such as the Kalahari, where we still find them even to this day, or toward the forests of Equatorial Africa, difficult to cultivate, where they have subsisted up to our time in sparse groupings, or else again toward the marshy regions of Lake Chad and of the upper Nile, where later they were met by the Nasamonians of Herodotus, or at last, toward the maritime coasts of northern Guinea, where they were seen by Hanno and Sataspe.

These first migrations of the Negroes must have been composed of the type called *Bantu*, whose almost pure descendants are still found in a compact group, with the exception of an island formed by the Hottentots, between the Equator and the Cape of Good Hope.

Subsequently to this first wave of Negro immigrants, another one was unfurled over Africa, of the same origin and in the same direction, but made up of slightly different elements. However this difference is doubtless attributable only to the long lapse of time between the first and second invasions, a space of time that cannot be evaluated but which perhaps was represented by thousands of years, during which an evolution necessarily took place in the primitive Negro stock.

If we admit that the new arrivals reached the African continent at about the same localities as those who had preceded them, that is to say, on the East coast and about as high up as the Comoro Islands, we are led to think that they found the best lands already occupied by the first immigrants. Thus the newcomers found themselves constrained to push further toward the North and toward the West and to settle among the Negrillos, remaining there in possession of the soil, demanding of them a hospitality which probably was not refused: hence the tradition, reported above, of the Negrillos' being regarded by the Negroes of the Sudan and of Guinea as the real masters of the land. They chose their domicile by preference in the uncovered regions, well watered and easily cultivated, situated between the Equator and the Sahara, absorbing the few *Bantu* elements which were already settled there or pushing them back towards the northeast (Kordofan) or towards the northwest (Cameroons, Gulf of Benin, Ivory Coast, Grain Coast, Rivières du Sud, Gambia and Casamance), where to-day we still find, here and there, languages, such as certain dialects of the Kordofan, for example the *Diola* of Gambia and Casamance, which are closely related to the *Bantu* type.

This second wave must have mixed with the Negrillos much more so than did the first Negro immigrants and little by little become assimilated with them, at the same time that they perfected the technical processes of the autochthones and of the *Bantu*, developing agriculture, introducing a rudi-



ment of cattle and poultry raising, domesticating the guinea-fowl, importing or generalizing the practice of making fire and its utilization for the cooking of food, inventing the working of iron and the making of pottery. Their languages must have possessed the same system of classifying names as those of the *Bantu*, but proceeding by means of suffixes instead of employing prefixes. From the linguistic point of view as well as from the anthropological, both the Negro and the Negrillo elements, in all places where they became fused, very certainly reacted upon one another in variable proportions, according as one or the other predominated. Of these unequal fusions were probably born the often profound differences that we note to-day between the various populations of Guinea and a part of the Sudan, such as the differences between their languages.

It is also highly probable that the Negro invaders who had advanced the furthest toward the North found themselves in contact with the primitive autochthones of the white Mediterranean race who were, from the central Sahara onwards, in the countries which later became Egypt and Libya, the contemporaries of the Negrillos of the southern Sahara and of the rest of Africa. This contact could not have taken place, or above all be prolonged, without resulting in mixtures and unions between the prehistoric whites of North Africa and the Negro immigrants succeeding the Negrillos or already partly mixed with them. It is very probable that to these far-off unions, to these very ancient mix-

tures, it is necessary to seek in greater part for the origins of those peoples or divisions of peoples, sometimes called Negroid, who are met with in an almost continuous line along the southern limit of the present desert zone and sometimes even farther to the North, from the Red Sea to the Atlantic Ocean, and who appear to us sometimes as populations of the white race strongly crossed with Negro blood (Bishari, Somali, Galla, Danakil, Sidama, etc.), sometimes as populations of the black race more or less mixed with white blood (Masai, Nuba, Tubu, Kanuri, Hausa, Songhoy, Sarakolle, Tukulors, Wolofs), the traces of hybridization revealing themselves in the anatomical or physiological aspect, sometimes in the intellectual aptitudes, sometimes in the language, or in all three elements at once. It is even possible that the elements of the white race which incontestably manifest themselves among certain Fulani families indicate by this circumstance an appreciable part of their origin. It is also possible that to the same cause must be attributed the very ancient traces of Negro blood revealed as much among the Egyptians of the epoch of the Pharaohs as among the modern Abyssinians and among many Berber and Arabo-Berber tribes, independently of the hybrids produced subsequently by unions with Negro slaves.

To sum up, in remaining within the limits of our study, this is more or less how one may suppose that the peopling of Sub-Saharan Africa took place, at least in its broad lines. To the South of the Equator, the Negroes of the first wave of invasion

settled almost everywhere, conserving in their midst islets of Negrillos who remained almost pure, and remaining themselves almost free from all crossing with the Negrillos as well as with the Negroes of the second invasion and with the autochthonous whites of the North: these are the Negroes of the type called *Bantu*. To the North of the Equator, in the Southern part of the Sudan and along the Gulf of Guinea, the Negroes of the second migration, more or less mixed with the Negrillos and with the most advanced elements of the *Bantu*, have constituted the extremely varied type that we call the Negroes of Guinea. Farther to the North again, Negroes coming equally from the second wave of invasion, by mixing with the Negrillos and with the autochthonous Mediterranean race, formed the type, also highly varied, which we designate as Sudanese. In many regions the passage from one of these three primordial types to the other takes place by gradations which are often imperceptible, giving birth to a great number of intermediate types which are very difficult to define.

Many facts corroborate the hypothesis which tends to relate the first formation of the Sudanese populations known as Negroid to an epoch far more remote than that which is generally assigned to it and to attribute to the prehistoric peoples who preceded the Egyptians, the Libyan Berbers and the Semites in North Africa, the influence which has often been accorded to these latter. It does not follow that the rôle of the Egyptians, the Libyan Berbers and the Semites has been of no consequence

in the definitive constitution of certain Negroid peoples labeled, the one as Chamites or Hamites, the other as Sudanese. But if this rôle cannot be denied in the development of the civilization of such peoples, or in a certain measure regarding the evolution of their languages, it seems very likely that it has been much less important, from the physiological point of view, than the rôle played by the most ancient populations of whom, after all, it must be remembered, we know almost nothing except that they already existed before the epoch of the first Egyptian dynasty.

In general we have a tendency to place much too near to us facts whose date we ignore and to put into periods with whose history we are approximately familiar, events which generally have preceded these periods by many centuries or even by many thousands of years and which, moreover, have required several centuries or even several millenniums for their integral development. This tendency may be remarked in many authors who deal with the formation of countries or peoples, and it is necessary to react against such an unfortunate habit.

It seems indeed that the Sahara has not always been the desert that it is to-day, but its drying up probably occurred no more quickly than the transformation into dry land of the ancient sea which extended where now the Isle of France is found. We should not forget that the limits assigned by Herodotus to the arable portion of Libya about five centuries before our era were sensibly the same as those which we observe to-day in Morocco, Algeria,

Tunisia, Tripolitania and in Cyrenaica. In the same way, the little that the Egyptian monuments reveal to us of the Negro populations of Africa tends to establish that these were nearly in the same condition and that they occupied nearly the same territories six thousand years ago as to-day. In reality, the formation of the Negro and Negroid peoples must have been accomplished in its broad lines at the time of Sesostris and perhaps even still earlier.

Changes have assuredly intervened since then. Groups have been built up, others have become dissociated. Portions of them have moved from one point to another, conquests and migrations have taken place which have caused the disappearance of ancient tribes and the birth of new ones. States have appeared and crumbled away. In a word, Negro Africa has lived like all other parts of the human world. But without any doubt, it had already arrived at adulthood long before the epoch of the first historic document that has come down to us.

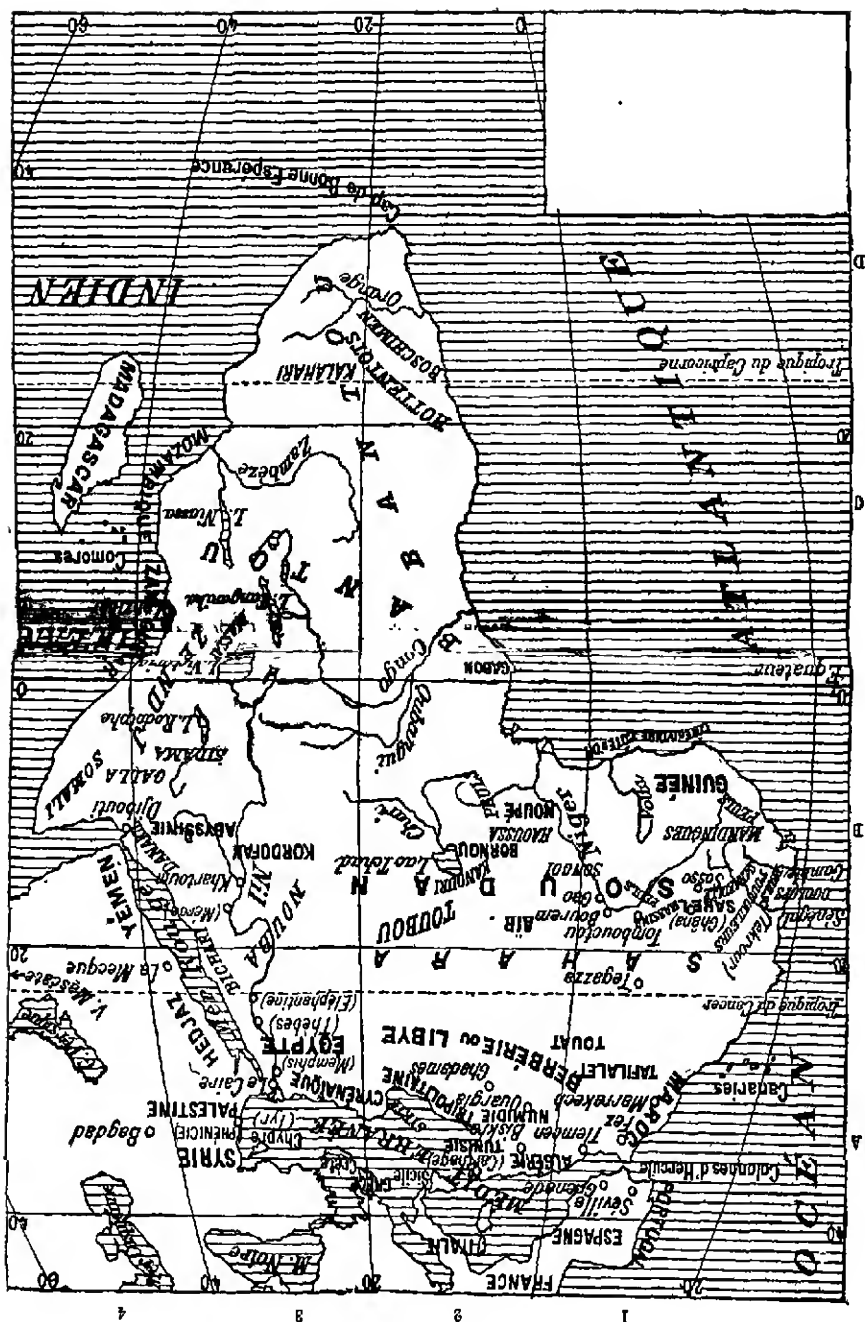
On the whole, the civilization of the Negroes themselves does not appear to have undergone very profound modifications during thousands of years. Even in our day, there exist more or less numerous Negro peoples whose material development seems to have remained at the same stage where we find it at the time of the Pharaohs, their garments, arms and utensils being identical with the garments, arms and utensils carried by the Negroes represented on the paintings and bas-reliefs of ancient Egypt.

However, in this matter evolution has been inevitably more marked than in the domain of physical

anthropology. It has also been very much aided by contact with superior civilizations which developed in North Africa at the historical epoch and, if certain Negro elements have not been able or have not known how to profit from this contact, others, indeed, have certainly benefited from it.

*The Negroes of Africa at the Time of Herodotus*

I have said above that it would perhaps be proper to attribute to the Negroes of the second wave of immigration the local invention of working in iron. It does not necessarily follow that they already knew this metal when they reached Africa or that they had not borrowed the secret of its manufacture from a foreign influence. In this regard, a passage from the History of Herodotus is very instructive. In Book II (§§ XXIX and XXX), the Greek author has given us approximately the northern limits attained at his time by the Negroes in the valley of the Nile, whom he calls "Ethiopians". These limits are sensibly identical with those attained by them in our day. The Negroes were already found, he tells us, "above Elephantine," upstream from the first cataract, some sedentary, others nomadic, living side by side with the Egyptians; but their true homeland began a little farther to the north of the present city of Khartoum, at Meroe, which, according to Herodotus, was their capital, and to the south of which lived the "Automoles," Egyptians in the service of the king of the "Ethiopians," who had established themselves in the adopted country,



marrying Negro women and causing the Negroes of the region to benefit by Egyptian civilization.

Further on (Book VII, § LXIX), passing in review the cosmopolitan contingents who made up the army of Xerxes, Herodotus tells us that the "Ethiopians"—a word which must always be understood to mean the African Negroes—were "clothed in leopard and lion skins, had bows made of the stems of palm-leaves at least four cubits in length and *long arrows of reed at the extremity of which was, instead of iron, a pointed stone which they also used for carving their seals.* Besides this, they carried *javelins armed with the horns of antelopes, pointed and worked like an iron lance-head* and clubs full of knots. When they went into battle, they rubbed half of their body with chalk and the other half with vermilion."

Who would not recognize in this portrait of Negro warriors many of the present tribes of the Gulf of Guinea, of the bend of the Niger and of Equatorial or Southern Africa? Apart from the arrow-heads and the javelin points which are now of iron instead of stone or horn, and by replacing the terms "chalk" and "vermilion" of the French translator<sup>1</sup> by "white earth" and "red earth," it is striking to ascertain how little the equipment of the Negroes of the army of Xerxes, four and a half centuries before our era, differed from that which we can see, twenty-four centuries later, on many of their descendants.

<sup>1</sup> The translation cited is that of Larcher, revised by Emile Personneaux (Paris, 1883, pp. 508, 509).



And we make no mistake about it: the "Ethiopians" in question were indeed the Negroes and not the ancestors of the present Abyssinians, to whom we commonly give the name Ethiopians. Herodotus himself specifies this detail a little further on (same Book, § LXX) by designating the Abyssinians as "Oriental Ethiopians" and in observing that they differed from the other "Ethiopians" in that they had straight hair, while the Negroes or Western Ethiopians, whom he calls simply "Ethiopians" or "Ethiopians of Libya," had hair "more frizzled than all other men." He adds that these two peoples spoke different languages.

According to these divers testimonies of Herodotus, joined to those of Hanno and of Sataspe, it can be inferred that, since the fifth century before our era, the Negroes occupied in Africa the same territories where we meet them to-day, that they had almost achieved their ethnic formation, although their absorption of the Negrillos was not quite as complete as it has since become, and finally that the customs and the material civilization of the most advanced among them were essentially that which can be observed in our days among the Negroes who have remained the most primitive.

This will be the conclusion of the first chapter, which, as can be seen, is more filled with *conjectures*<sup>1</sup> than with facts. As the title indicates, we are dealing with prehistory, and prehistory remains inevitably within the domain of hypothesis, whatever be the human society to which it pertains. Only, in

<sup>1</sup> Translator's italics.

what concerns the Negroes of Africa, prehistory has lasted much, much longer than history and history does not begin till an epoch very near to our own times.

## CHAPTER I

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## CHAPTER II

### DEVELOPMENT OF NEGRO CIVILIZATIONS IN ANTIQUITY

PAUCITY OF HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION — ANCIENT EGYPT AND NEGRO AFRICA — "AGGRY BEADS" — PHENICIAN AND CARTHAGINIAN INFLUENCE—THE ABYSSINIAN SEMITES AND THE "BENI-ISRAEL"—ROMANS AND BERBERS

#### *Paucity of Historical Documentation*

I was obliged in the course of the preceding chapter to use almost solely the hypothetical mode. In this one and the following, I will again be forced to have very frequent recourse to it, so rare are the documents on which we can rely with sufficient confidence to make deductions from them.

Until now, in fact, Negro Africa has revealed to us no monument except for some ruins which do not recount their history nor do we know to whom they can be attributed, and some tombs which might go back from fifty to five thousand years, in which is found everything except precise indications, unless an Arabic inscription informs us that we have to do with modern burial places.

The Negroes have written nothing with the exception of rare works in Arabic of which the most ancient that we now possess dates from the sixteenth century. Copied for the most part the one from the other, they do not contain more than a few pages on the history of the country and whatever may

be true is obscured by legends and by the pains taken to relate everything to Islam and the family of Mohammed.

Much more numerous and rich are the traditions conserved orally among the natives, but they become very much confused as soon as they relate to facts going back several centuries and, without in any way denying their value, this source of information cannot be used except with the utmost prudence.

In the Greek and Latin authors, bits of documentation, often contradictory and supported by nothing very solid, can at least furnish some vague and incohesive indications, sometimes a few benchmarks. The names of the countries, localities and peoples are generally difficult to identify and when they are examined impartially it is found that they all refer to countries, localities and peoples belonging to North Africa and not to Negro Africa. When, by chance, geographical or ethnical information seems to refer to the Negroes or to their country, it is drowned in an amalgam of impossibilities or obscurities from which it is extremely difficult to obtain any light.

For the period of the Middle Ages, we are a little better informed by Mussulman geographers and historians of Berbery, Spain, Egypt and the Arabian peninsula, and by some works later reëdited in Arabic by the Sudanese, to which I have alluded above. This information also is very imperfect and entirely fragmentary, being limited to the borders of the Sahara and the West coast of Africa which were in more or less direct relations with the Arabs

of the Mediterranean or the Gulf of Oman. Concerning the more distant Negro peoples, those of Guinea, of the Congo, of South Africa, there is almost absolute night up to the day when they began to be visited by Europeans, that is to say, up to the fifteenth century of our era.

*Ancient Egypt and Negro Africa*

In the preceding chapter we have seen how much we are permitted to conjecture as to the situation of the African Negroes at the time of Herodotus. We have also seen, according to the testimony of this author, that Egyptian civilization was not without influence on that of the Negroes in the region of Meroe. It may be admitted that the influence of ancient Egypt went still further and penetrated even into the upper part of the valley of the Nile. Perhaps, gradually, it made itself felt as far as the Great Lakes, as certain artistic manifestations seem to testify by recalling the manner and processes of ancient Egypt. It is even possible that, transmitted indirectly from people to people, infiltrations of an industrial or religious order, having their point of departure at Memphis or Thebes, had gained the farthest lands of the Nile, probably without ever having been in direct relations with Egypt, such as certain regions of the Gulf of Benin or the neighboring lands.

*"Aggry Beads"*

One meets nearly everywhere in Africa, either in the tombs or in the tumuli reputed to be ancient, or

on the bodies of the living who claim to have received them from their most distant ancestors, beads to which the Negroes attribute a very great value which strangely resemble in form, coloration and material, analogous beads worn by the Egyptians and with which they often decorated their mummies. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this sort of bead, generally cylindrical, was the object of an active commerce on the part of English and especially Dutch navigators, who bought them from the natives of the countries where they were relatively abundant and sold them at a profit in the countries where they were rarer. These navigators gave them the name of "*pierres d'aigres*" or *aggry beads*, the exact origin of which is not known. At various times the glass-workers of Venice and of Bohemia have manufactured counterfeits by which the Negroes did not allow themselves to be deceived.

However it be, the presence among the African Negroes of these certainly very ancient beads, the value which they represent in their eyes and the mystery which surrounds their original provenance are not sufficient for forming a conclusion as to the existence of commercial relations between the Egypt of the Pharaohs and Western and Central Africa. On the one hand, in fact, Assyrian and Phœnician tombs contain the identical beads, so that we are left perplexed as to the place of their manufacture and, in consequence, as to the point of departure which might be sought at Nineveh or Tyre as well as at Memphis. On the other hand, they have been found in Northern Europe and Eastern Asia, which indi-

ates a considerable area of dispersion, certainly out of proportion to the limits which might be reasonably assigned to the influence of Egyptian civilization.

In most of the countries where, even to-day, the Negroes find "aggry beads" by ransacking ancient burial places, there is a tradition that these beads have been imported by long-haired men of light color who, according to legend, came from the sky and whom their congeners interred after decorating their corpses with the beads in question. At first this tradition suggested to me the possibility of caravan relations between the ancient Egyptians and populations as far removed from the Nile as those, for example, of the Gold Coast and the Ivory Coast. I have reflected since, that, if it be admitted that men of the white race, carriers of "aggry beads," advanced at one time as far as those distant regions, it would be much more probable that they came from Berbery—in the geographical sense to-day given to the word—than from Egypt. It has not come to our knowledge that the Egyptians had a great amount of commerce with the Negroes, except those of the Nile valley from among whom they procured slaves for themselves, while at all times, as at the present, the inhabitants of what Herodotus called Libya and what we denominate as Berbery or the Barbary Coast (Tripoly, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco) have not hesitated to cross the Sahara and to adventure as far as the Negroes to buy from them principally gold-powder in exchange for various sorts of merchandise. Among this merchandise, the

Arab geographer Yakut mentions copper rings and blue glass beads as being very much in honor at his time, that is to say, at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Now the "*aggrý beads*" which are the most appreciated by the Negroes are precisely beads of blue glass.

#### *Phœnician and Carthaginian Influence*

We have therefore the right to suppose that these beads, perhaps of Phœnician manufacture, but in any case abundant among the Phœnicians, were first imported by them into the settlements that they had founded as early as the twelfth century B.C. on the Mediterranean coast of Africa; that their colonists, Carthaginians and others, later introduced them into the Sahara even as far as the Sudan; that Berber merchants, and then Arabs and Arabo-Berbers of Tripolitania, of Tuat, of Tafilalet and of Dara or Draa continued this traffic, and that after all, the men of long hair and light color, of so-called celestial origin, mentioned by the Negro traditions, may have been successively Phœnicians, Punic, Berber and Moorish caravan merchants.

As for the trace of Egyptian influence that voyagers have claimed to find in the houses of Jenne and in the pyramidal minarets of Sudanese mosques, it is useless to demonstrate its non-existence otherwise than in recalling that the constructions in question are subsequent to the Islamization of the country of the Negroes and remind one singularly of a type of architecture which is widely spread in the Arabo-Berber country north of the Sahara. It is neces-



sary to mention again the fantasy of those who have tried to discover the origin of the name Fula, Fulbe or Fulani in that of the *fellah* of Egypt, without considering that *fellah* is an Arabic word serving to designate the peasants of any country and of any nationality and that there is no more a *fellah* of Egypt than of Morocco or Syria or any other place where there are people given to the cultivation of the land.

On the contrary, an attentive study of the facts leads me to formulate an hypothesis which, without doubt, will be verified with time and which would tend to attribute to the Phœnician colonies of North Africa, notably Carthage, a very considerable influence on the development of Sudanese civilizations, much more considerable and also much more direct, at least in that which concerns Western and Central Africa, than the influence having its point of departure in Egypt. This hypothesis does not rest only on simple conjectures.

In studying the words of Semitic origin which have acquired rights of citizenship in most of the Negro languages of the Sudan and its hinterland, I have ascertained that, on the whole, they are divisible into two large categories which are very distinct from each other. The one relates almost exclusively to the dogmas and rites of the Massulman religion or to legal notions, hagiography, magic, which constitute the accessory baggage of all Islamization; these, because of their meanings and the ideas which they represent, could not have been introduced except subsequently to the Hegira, they have not been

borrowed from spoken Arabic but from written Arabic, and have passed into the Sudanese languages with the form, altered only by the Negro pronunciation, that they have in grammatical Arabic: they are the words of scholarly formation. The other category comprises words serving to designate material objects—for example, pieces of harness, arms, utensils, clothing, etc.—or general ideas which are most often abstract, objects and ideas which the Negroes did not possess and which they borrowed at the same time as the vocables meant to represent them; these words have corresponding forms in Arabic, since, as I have said, they are incontestably Semitic; but they never answer to the grammatical form and they often depart enormously from the popular form; between the Arabic word and the word incorporated into the Sudanese languages, one does not find the alternating phonetics which are the law for the passage from Arabic into the Sudanese dialects of the words belonging to the first category: it seems then that the borrowing has been made from a Semitic language other than Arabic and, apparently, at a date far anterior to the introduction of Arabic into Africa. May not these words have been borrowed from the Phœnician or the Punic?

Whatever has been the scope of maritime expeditions undertaken by the Phœnicians and the Carthaginians and no matter how far Hanno and his companions may have gone toward the South, beyond the Pillars of Hercules, it is improbable that Carthage and other Phœnician colonies of Africa should have been able to establish continuous relations by

sea with the Negroes. But it was certainly not the same by the way of land.

Carthage took from the Phœnicians, her founders, exceptional aptitudes for what one might call long-distance commerce. Her citizens were not slow to perceive the advantages which they could procure by trading with the Negroes who, beyond the unproductive desert, inhabited fertile regions, rich in men and gold. They organized caravans which must have very closely resembled those which still circulate to-day across the Sahara and which traveled to the Sudan in search of slaves, gold dust, ostrich feathers, ivory, in exchange for textiles, clothing, copper, beads. These Carthaginian merchants doubtless did the same as their Tripolitanian and Moroccan successors do in our day: they were not content to escort their convoys of camels, they sojourned some little time in the country of the Negroes, settling in temporary colonies in the principal centers along the edge of the desert and, from there, just as the Moroccans do to-day, went out into the neighboring provinces.

During hundreds and hundreds of years, there must have been other affairs than the exchange of products between Carthage and the Sudan: there was contact between the still very rude Negroes and the representatives of one of the most refined civilizations known to antiquity. This contact could not but be fruitful.

As I have just suggested, these Carthaginian merchants introduced among the Negroes, together with the new words designating or expressing them, new

objects and new ideas. Doubtless, the horse, coming from Libya, was already known in the Sudan but, also without doubt, was hardly utilized there: the Carthaginians taught the Negroes the art of equitation and the use of the bit, stirrups and saddle. At the same time that they sold them textiles and a sort of chemise they probably brought them the seeds of the cotton plant and taught them to weave cotton fibers and to sew goods. They also showed them how to work the gold which the Negroes had been content until then to extract from alluviums and, by imitation, the copper and bronze industries developed, while those of iron and clay became perfected and the glass industry was born and still existed in the last century in some localities of the Nupe on the lower Niger.

Of course, all this is only *supposition*,<sup>1</sup> but it is probable supposition.

#### *Abyssinian Semites and the Beni-Israel*

In East Africa another civilization of equally Semitic origin accomplished an analogous work among the Negroes and Negroid populations of its neighborhood. I speak of the Abyssinian civilization which, born in the South of the Arabian peninsula, passed into Africa with Yemenite immigrants at a very remote epoch and developed in contact with Egyptian civilization, on which, in turn, it did not fail to react more than once. It introduced among the more or less mixed Negroes on the coast of the Red Sea, as well as among the Negroes scattered in

<sup>1</sup> Translator's italics.

the eastern Sudan and between the mountains of Ethiopia and the Great Lakes, a transformation comparable to that which the Phœnician colonies of the Mediterranean produced from afar among the Negroes of the central and western Sudan.

Local traditions have conserved the memory of other Semites, whom they call by the name of Israelites (Beni-Israel), without our being able to decide whether this name is of Mussulman importation and therefore relatively recent or if it really answers to the origin of this mysterious element. It is very possible, indeed, that the Semites in question came from the land of Abraham and were a branch of that population, in part Hebraic, whose astonishing destinies have not troubled Bossuet alone. Should we relate them to the Hebrews whom Joseph, son of Israel, brought to Egypt and who did not all return to the Holy Land with Moses, a certain number, on the contrary, making their way toward the West? Should we see in them the remains of those Hyksos mentioned in the Egyptian annals who, after all, were perhaps not distinct from the Hebrews of Joseph? Should they be identified with the Jews who, as a consequence of religious quarrels, emigrated from Tripolitania toward the end of the first century of our era in the direction of Aïr and toward the beginning of the following century in that of Tuat, and who afterwards did not leave any real historical traces of their passage? Should we admit several successive migrations, the first of which goes back to the epoch of Moses and the dispersion of the Hyksos, that is, to about sixteen centuries B.C., and

the last of which are as recent as the first centuries of the Christian era?

However it be, and whatever name be given to the so-called "Beni-Israel," it appears very certain that they were Semites who were at once shepherds, farmers and artisans of a very advanced civilization, who were not content, like their congeners of Carthage and Abyssinia, to have commerce with the Negroes and to promote by radiation the development of their civilization but who lived in large groups in the country of the Negroes or at least at the Northern limits of this country, bringing with them the zebu or humped ox and the wool-bearing sheep, constructing in the Sudan houses of masonry and wells cemented by a special process, introducing the arts of cattle raising and green gardening, contributing in a certain measure to the population of the Sahel and the Massina and to the hybridization of the Negro populations already settled in these regions, forming perhaps the kernel of pastoral tribes who, under the name of Fulani, as we call them, or *Fulbe*, as they call themselves, later spread out from the Sahel and the Massina on the one side as far as the Atlantic and on the other beyond Lake Chad, finally creating in the West of Timbaktu, at Ghana, a State whose masters they long remained and which may be considered the cradle and the model of that which has been the most perfected in the civilizations of the Negroes of Africa.

Without either wishing or being able to commit myself on the mystery which up to the present surrounds the origin of these "Beni-Israel," or pre-

tended such, the rôle which they played in Negro Africa, or at least the one that local tradition attributes to them, seems to me to be too considerable to be passed over in silence. Perhaps, after all, it is to them, rather than to the Carthaginians or concurrently with the latter, that we ought to attribute the importation into the Sudanese languages of the words of ancient Semitic origin above mentioned.

*Romans and Berbers*

As for the Romans, whatever may be said of them, it seems indeed that their intervention did not take place on the other side of the Sahara and that their influence on the Negroes of Africa was nil. Their only relations with the Negroes consisted in acquiring a certain number of them as slaves, but they themselves never went to fetch them, being content to buy them from the merchants of Carthage or Numidia. It is possible that the Roman expedition which pushed farthest toward the South was that of Julius Maternus who, at the order of the Emperor Domitian, departed in 80 A.D. in search of the gold mines of the Sudan, but it probably did not go farther than Aïr.

The Libyans or Berbers, more or less direct descendants—and probably very mixed—of the ancient autochthonous whites of North Africa, lived during many centuries in contact with the most Northern of the Negroes. However, it does not seem that they ever had an appreciable influence on the development of Negro society, just as the influence of Libyan Berber dialects on the Sudanese languages

seems to have been entirely negligible except with respect to the Hausa. In the other Negro languages along the edge of the Sahara, barely half a score of vocables of Berber origin can be discovered: sometimes the name for horse and nearly always that for camel (though not yet proved with certainty), the name of the straight sword, that of a kind of cake, one of the appellations given to the poor and those of little means, and finally the name for Easter and for sin, the two latter, moreover, having been borrowed by the Berbers from the Latin during the ascendancy of Christianity in North Africa. And that is all or almost all.

This is not as surprising as one might suppose at first sight. On the one hand, the nomad Berbers of the desert, the only ones who have been and who still are in contact with the Negroes, do not pass for ever having had a very advanced civilization: their mode of life was not adapted to it. And then, one of the general characteristics of the Berbers, as M. Henri Basset has very well shown in a recent book,<sup>1</sup> is to adopt easily the language and certain exterior aspects of the civilization and the religion of the foreigners who momentarily dominate them and to exercise no visible influence on this people or any other foreign population living in contact with them. Thus the Negroes of Africa owe very few obligations to their Berber neighbors, whereas they are considerably indebted to the Semites, from the distant epoch when a first current of Semitic influence made itself felt among the prehistoric

<sup>1</sup> *Essai sur la littérature des Berbères*, Alger, 1920.



autochthones of North Africa up to the time of the Islamization of the same country by the Arabs and the expeditions directed from Maskat along the coast of Zanzibar, in passing by the periods of the Phœnician colonies, the splendor of Carthage and the Israelite or pseudo-Israelite immigrations.

But it is time to close this too long account devoted to the different Mediterranean and Asiatic contributions which have introduced a very important element of civilization among the Negroes of the Sudan and of East Africa, from where it spread out little by little, progressively attenuated, as far as South Africa. Now, in a new chapter, we will come to what is known of the history, properly speaking, of the Negroes of Africa. We will begin with the State of Ghana to which allusion has already been made.

## CHAPTER II

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## CHAPTER III

### NEGRO AFRICA IN THE MIDDLE AGES

THE EMPIRE OF GHANA—THE ALMORAVIDE MOVEMENT—  
THE KINGDOMS OF DIARA AND OF SOSO—THE BEGINNINGS  
OF THE SONGHOY EMPIRE—THE MANDINGO EMPIRE—THE  
MOSSI EMPIRES

#### *The Empire of Ghana*

We do not know at what epoch or exactly by whom was founded the kingdom which later gave birth to the empire of Ghana. Local traditions, confirmed by the works of scholars of Timbuktu and of Arab historians, only let us conjecture that this State goes back at least to the fourth century of the Christian era, that its first sovereigns belonged to the white race and that, a certain time after the Hegira, the power passed into the hands of a family of the black race belonging to the Sarakolle people. Arab authors, moreover, inform us that the Empire of Ghana was flourishing in the ninth and the tenth centuries of our era, that its decline began toward the middle of the eleventh century under the conquering and destructive movement of the Almoravides, that its débris fell under the yoke of the Mandingo and that its capital, last vestige of its sunken glory, ceased to exist after about the middle of the thirteenth century.

This capital, whose name is mentioned for the first time, it seems, in the *Golden Prairies* of Masudi,

who died in 956, was visited in the second half of the tenth century by the celebrated Arab geographer Ibn-Haukal, and Bekri gives a fairly detailed description of it in the following century. It was called Ghana only by the foreigners and notably the Arabs, who made it known by this name in Europe and Asia. This was not its name but, as Bekri expressly says and as Sudanese traditions confirm, one of the titles borne by the sovereign, who was further designated by that of *kaya-maga* or simply *maga* or *magan* (the master) or again by that of *tounka* (the prince). The city itself was known to the inhabitants under the name of *Kumbi-Kumbi* (the butte or tumulus), by which even to-day its site is pointed out. It is situated between Goumbu and Walata, about a hundred kilometers to the north-north-east of the first of these localities, in a region of the Hodh which the Moors call *Howker* or *Howkar* (a geographical term common to many sub-Saharan regions), the Mandingo and the Bambara calling it *Bagana* or *Mara*, the Kassonke *Bakhunu*, and the Sarakolle *Wagadu*.<sup>1</sup> It extends in a general fashion to the North and to the North-East of Goumbu.

The explorer Bonnel de Mézières, who visited and excavated this locality in 1914, found there the vestiges of a great city corresponding very exactly to that described by Bekri, with ruins of hewn stone constructions, sometimes sculptured.

<sup>1</sup> The word *mara* means a region without permanent water courses but provided with ponds; the Mandingo word *bagana*, which became *bakhu-nu* in certain dialects, and the Sarakolle word *waga-du* both signify "a country of herds, region of cattle raising."

The region where Ghana or Kumbi was built is now very arid. In truth, it rains here every year, but there are no rivers and, except at a few points where pools or sheets of not very deep subterranean water exist, the vegetation, although fairly thick in spots, is reduced to thin pasturage, gum-trees and other spiny bushes. The region contains no village and is traversed only by nomadic Moors and hunters of the Nemadi or Nimadi tribe. But very numerous and extended traces of former habitations and burial places which turn up at every instant, show that the country was formerly inhabited, in part at least, by sedentary peoples, and lead us to suppose that it was better watered than it is to-day and more suitable for tillage. Besides, Bekri speaks of vast and prosperous fields which extended to the East of Ghana and local traditions are unanimous in attributing the decline of the kingdom and the dispersion of its inhabitants to the drying up of the Wagadu and consequent famine. It is probable that these circumstances had much more influence on the end of the empire of Ghana than the successive pillages to which the city was subjected by the Almoravides in 1076, by the king of Soso, Sumanguru Kannte, in 1203, and finally by the king of the Mandingo, Sundiata Keïta, toward 1240. A populous city and a flourishing State survived pillage and defeat, but could not resist lack of water and nourishment.

At that distant epoch when they lent themselves to tillage and a sedentary life, the Bagana or Wagadu and most of the sub-Saharan districts which we unite to-day under the name of Hodh in the East

and Mauritania in the West, must have been inhabited by the Negroes, more or less mixed with Negrillos and white autochthones of North Africa. These Negroes formed an ensemble, fairly disparate perhaps in certain aspects, which Moorish traditions generally designate by the term *Bafur*; from them have doubtless gone forth, by ramification, the Songhoy or Songai toward the East, the Serers toward the West and, toward the Center, a great people called *Gangara* (*Gangari* in the singular) by the Moors, *Wangara* by Arab authors and writers of Timbuktu, and comprising in our day, as its principal divisions, the Mandingo properly speaking or the Malinke, the Bambara and the Jula.

It is in this region and among these *Bafur*, doubtless already ramified, that the immigrants of the Semitic race treated in the last chapter probably settled, as they pass for having colonized particularly the Massina and the Wagadu and for having founded the kingdom and the city of Ghana. As we have seen, these immigrants probably included at the same time farmers and shepherds. However considerable their number, it was certainly very inferior to that of the Negroes in the midst of whom they settled and over whom they established their domination. There must have been, from the very beginning, a number of unions between the whites and the blacks and of these unions were born, it seems, two very important populations, each of which in turn was to play a rôle of the first order in the history of the western and central Sudan and in the development of its civilization.

Even at Ghana, in the Wagadu, in the Massina and at still other places, the union of the Semites, for the most part sedentary, with the Wangara, who were considerably more numerous than the former, probably engendered the people who give themselves the name of *Sarakolle*, that is to say, "white men," in memory of one of their ancestors. They are called by several Sudanese tribes *Soninke*, by the Moors Assuanik; the Bambara denominate them *Mara-ka* or *Mar'-ka* (people of the Mara or Wagadu) and the Arab authors and the Songhoy of Timbuktu designate them by the term *Wakore*. These people spoke a language closely related to that of the Wangara; it became the customary language of Ghana and is still to-day that of the *Sarakolle* of the Sahel and of Senegal, of the sedentary inhabitants of the black race called Azer or Ahl-Massine (people of the Massina), of certain oases such as Tichit, and finally of some tribes who have either adopted the errant habits of their Moorish neighbors or conserved those of their white ancestors, for example, the Guirganke shepherds and also, it is believed, of the Nemadi hunters.

To the West of Ghana, in the region of the Termes pastures, the mixture of the nomadic Semites with the Serers and especially the long cohabitation of these Semites in the midst of the Serers must have given birth to the Fulani or Fulbe people, who speak a language quite near to that of the Serers and who later swarmed toward the Massina and, on the other side, toward the Tagant and the Futa-Toro, afterwards to send forth groups to the south-west into

the Futa-Jallon, to the east and to the southeast, in the bend of the Niger, to Hausaland, Adamawa and other countries neighboring Lake Chad.

However, at Ghana itself, after a succession of princes of the white race who, according to the *Tarikh es-Sudan*, must have numbered 44, of whom 22 came before the Hegira and 22 after it, but of whom the last, according to the *Tarikh el-fettâch*, was contemporary with Mohammed, the power passed to the Sarakolle dynasty of the Sisse which perhaps, as its present descendants claim, was related to the dynasty of the white race and, in a way, constituted only a continuation of it, more or less mixed with Negro blood.

However that be, it is under the reign of these Sisse, whom Masudi and other Arab authors formally claim to have been Negroes, that the State of Ghana attained its apogee. In the testimony of Bekri, of Yakut and of Ibn-Khaldoun, its power made itself felt from the ninth century over the Zenaga or Sanhaja Berbers (Lemtuna, Goddala or Jeddala, Messufa, Lemta, etc.) who had shortly before pushed their southern advance-guards as far as the Hodh and into what is now Mauritania; Howdaghost, the capital of these Berbers, situated doubtless to the south-west and not far from Tichit, was vassal to the Negro king of Ghana and paid tribute to him; an attempt at independence on the part of the chief of the Lemtuna led, about 990, to an expedition of the king of Ghana, who captured Howdaghost and reaffirmed his authority over the sedentary Berbers and over the "veiled Zenaga"

of the desert, as several Arab authors express themselves.

On the South, the dependencies of Ghana stretched to the other side of the Senegal river and as far as the gold mines of the Falémé and of the Bambuk, whose product fed the treasury of the Sisse and served to operate fruitful exchanges with Moroccan caravans coming from Tafilalit and from the Dara; they extended even as far as Manding, on the upper Niger. Towards the East, the limits of the kingdom reached nearly to the region of the lakes situated to the west of Timbuktu. To the North, its influence was felt in the very heart of the Sahara and its renown had penetrated as far as Cairo and Bagdad.

However, at the beginning of the eleventh century, Islamism began to penetrate the Berbers of the Sahara and the edge of the Sudan, the majority of whom until then seem to have practiced a religion which was a mixture of Christianity and paganism. Toward 1040, a movement of Mussulman propaganda took birth among portions of the Lemtuna tribe, which inhabited principally the Tagant and the district of Howdaghost, and that of the Goddala or Jeddala, who led a nomadic life between the Mauritanian Adrar and the Atlantic and formed a sort of federation with the former. From a monastery situated on an island of the lower Senegal or in the proximity of its outlet, the famous sect of the Almoravides (*al-morabetîne*, the "marabouts," etymologically "those who close themselves up in a *ribât* or monastery"), set out to preach Islamism and to wage war from the Sudan to Spain.



*The Almoravide Movement*

Under the direction of the fiery preacher Abdallah ben Yassine, a Berber of North African origin, as fierce a religious reformer as an indefatigable warrior, and under the nominal command of Yahia ben Ibrahim, chief of the Goddala, then of Yahia ben Omar of the Lemtuna tribe, a movement occurred which affected only ephemeral political results among the Negroes but which had very durable and quite important ones from the point of view of religion. It was indeed to the Almoravides that we must attribute the conversion to Islamism of the Sudanese groups who have since then propagated this religion over a notable part of Africa: Tekurians or Tukulors, Sarakolle, Jula and Songhoy.

From the middle of the eleventh century, a sharp and merciless struggle began between the Almoravide bands, who represented Islam and who were stimulated by the desire to shake off the yoke of the Negroes, and the Sarakolle kings of Ghana who, although always having been hospitable to the Mussulmans were considered to be the champions of paganism. In 1054, Howdaghost, though the capital of a Berber kingdom, was attacked, taken and pillaged by Abdallah ben Yassine, under the pretext that the town paid tribute to the king of Ghana.

At the same time an active religious propaganda was carried on by the efforts of the same Abdallah among the Negroes who then resided on both banks of the Senegal, and also among the Nigerian popu-

lations. But it often met with a resistance which, when it could not manifest itself otherwise, was expressed by an exodus of the inhabitants. It is thus that a majority of the Serers emigrated to the left bank of the river in the Tekrur (which corresponds almost to the province we call the Futa-Toro), whence a considerable number went to form groups in the Sine, where we still find them to-day. They left the field clear for the Berbers in what has since become Mauritania, hunted at the same time by the desire to escape the constraint and the exactions of the Almoravides and by the need of seeking more fertile lands. It is thus again that, pushed by analogous motives, the Fulani of Termes and of the Tagant began to swarm with their herds toward the same region of the Futa-Toro, where for a long time they must have energetically defended paganism against Mohammedan enterprise.

However, certain royal families of the Negro country, attracted to the new religion by the prestige which attached to its adepts, ranged themselves deliberately under the banner of Mohammed. Such was the case of the princes who then held the power in the Tekrur, under the more or less distant tutelage of the emperors of Ghana, and who, like the latter, must have belonged to the Sarakolle race. They reigned over a people who were probably very composite, formed of Sarakolle, Mandingo, Serers and perhaps Wolof elements, who ended by adopting the language of the Fulani, their neighbors, and known to us to-day under the name of Tukulors, this

word being only a modification of the primitive name of the kingdom and city of Tekrur.<sup>1</sup>

A disciple of Abdallah ben Yassine, about whom numerous legends are current and whose memory has been handed down to us under several different names, among which that of Abu-Dardaï, converted to Islamism the princes and notables of the Tekrur, who became effective allies of the Almoravides.

A Lemtuna Berber, who, according to Leo the African, was none other than the very father of Yahia ben Omar and the famous Abubekr or Bubakar, traveled as far as Manding and succeeded in enrolling in the new religion the king of the country, named Baramendana, whom he is supposed to have influenced to undertake a pilgrimage to Mecca.

However, one should not exaggerate the importance of these conversions effected among the Negroes by the Almoravides, or claim, as is sometimes done, that they gained the entire Sudan for Islamism. In reality, the conversions do not seem to have been serious and lasting except among the princes and higher officials and their immediate circle. The mass of the people either resisted Islamization by migration, as we have seen in the case of the Serers and the Fulani, or else they did not let themselves be persuaded by the efforts of the Almo-

<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the facts given by Arab authors of the Middle Ages, as well as by local traditions, it has been agreed to place the site of the city of Tekrur not far from Podor in the province of the Senegalese Futa called Toro. In the course of time the name Tekrur was applied by Mussulman writers to the whole of the Negro country at the Southern border of the Sahara, in great part Islamized; thus it became almost synonymous with "Sudan" and it is with this meaning that it has long figured on our maps.

ravide preachers, as was the case with the Wolofs and the Mandingo,<sup>1</sup> or else again, accepted the new faith only to abandon it when the ephemeral power of the disciples of Abdallah ben Yassine came to an end. It is only among the Tekrurians or Tukulors, among the Songhoy and, strange to say, among the Sarakolle and the Jula, their descendants, that Islamism penetrated widely and strongly.

The Sarakolle, in fact, who represented the pagan element in all its vigor, finished, under constraint and force, by accepting, after their defeat, the religion of their conquerors, afterwards becoming the stanchest Mussulmans of all the western Sudan, carrying with them the Mussulman faith into the numerous regions of the Senegal, the Sahel and the Massina where they settled after the fall of Ghana and the dispersion of its inhabitants, passing the religion on to that curious population, commercial and enterprising, the Jula, who are considered to be an issue of the Sarakolle of Dia or Diakha (Massina) and of Jenne and who, in their turn, propagated Islamism as far as the northern boundary of the great equatorial forest. From the end of the eleventh century, less than fifty years after the first preaching of Abdallah and his missionaries, Islamism had attained some points situated at least 400 kilometers from the coast of the Gulf of Guinea; the Mussulman Jula, attracted into this region by the abundance of kola-nuts, had founded Bego near the

<sup>1</sup> Bekri, after having recounted in detail the conversion of the Mandingo king Baramendana, adds that the mass of his subjects remained pagan.

elbow formed by the Black Volta at the height of 8° North latitude, not far from the present village of Banda or Fougula (English Gold Coast). This city soon became a very important metropolis and an active center of commerce and Islamic propaganda; toward the end of the fourteenth or the beginning of the fifteenth century, its inhabitants dispersed and went to settle farther to the west near modest hamlets, such as Gotogo (Bonduku) and Kpon (Kong), situated in the present French colony of the Ivory Coast, transforming them rapidly into veritable cities, enriching themselves by commerce in kolas, cattle, fabrics and gold-powder, and introducing habits of intellectual research which have continued up to our time.

But we must return to the history of the struggle between the Almoravides and Ghana. In 1057, Abubekr ben Omar had succeeded his brother Yahia as chief of the former and had begun the conquest of southern Morocco with the aid of Abdallah ben Yassine. The death of the latter, happening unexpectedly in 1058 or 1059, made Abubekr the sole and uncontested master of the Almoravides. The following year, leaving his cousin Yussuf ben Tachfine to finish the conquest of Morocco and to found Marrakech, Abubekr betook himself in the direction of the Adrar and of the Tagant, where the Berber tribes were making war on each other. After restoring peace among them and reasserting his own authority, he gave all his efforts to the destruction of the empire of Ghana. Ghana, however, did not succumb until the end of some fifteen years, after

a desperate resistance in the course of which the Berber troops experienced more than one defeat. At last, in 1076, the Almoravides captured the old Sudanese city and put to the sword all the inhabitants who would not embrace Islamism. Eleven years later, in 1087, shortly after the taking of Seville by Yussuf ben Tachfine, which gave Spain to the Almoravides who were already masters of Morocco, Abubekr was killed in the Adrar during the course of a new revolt of his most direct subjects, and the power of his sect and his dynasty, which had just asserted itself in such a brilliant manner in the North of Africa and the South of Europe, disappeared from the very country that had constituted its point of departure.

At any rate, Ghana was never able to recover its past grandeur. Several provinces of the empire had profited by the struggle between the Sisse and the Almoravides to free themselves from the tutelage of the supreme *tounka* or *maga* and had become independent kingdoms, each of which had its own *tounka* or *maga*, belonging to some one of the great Sarakolle families among whom the sovereigns of Ghana chose the governors of the distant districts of the empire.

#### *The Kingdom of Diara*

It is thus that the Sarakolle dynasty of the Niakhate had founded at *Diara*, to the North-East, near the present post of Niōro, the kingdom of the Kaniaga or of the *mana* or *mana-magan*, which was not slow to become master of the Tekrur and to include

nearly all of what now constitutes the Sudanese Sahel, that is to say, the larger part of the former southern dependencies of Ghana. Toward 1270, the Diawara dynasty replaced the Niakhate at Diatra; it maintained itself in power up to 1754, the epoch of the conquest of the Kaniaga by the Bambara-Masasi.

In the interval, the authority of the Diawara had lost its vigor and had been undermined little by little by the continually growing power of the Mandingo Empire, to which the Kaniaga had become vassals toward the end of the thirteenth century or at the beginning of the fourteenth, afterwards changing their suzerain and becoming incorporated, in the sixteenth century, into the Songhoy Empire of Gao.

#### *The Kingdom of Soso*

Farther to the East, about midway between Goumbu and Bamako, is a village by the name of *Soso* which also had its hour of celebrity. Here the kings of Ghana supported a governor taken from the Sarakolle family of Diarrisso who, toward the end of the eleventh century, did the same as the Niakhate governor of Diara at the same epoch and made himself independent. A century afterwards, about 1180, another Sarakolle family, the Kannte, belonging, it is said, to the blacksmith caste, overturned the dynasty of the Diarisso and installed itself in the latter's place. Under the direction of Sumanguru Kannte, who passed for being a skillful general and a no less skillful sorcerer, the kingdom of Soso took on a considerable expansion. In 1203, Sumanguru captured Ghana and reduced the descendants of the

former suzerains of Soso to the state of vassal. This important achievement has been reported by Ibn Khaldoun, whose text, incorrectly interpreted, for a long time led to the belief in the legend of the destruction of Ghana by the Soso or Susu of Guinea, which legend was only an error based on a simple and fortuitous homonym. The same prince then turned his arms toward the South against the Mandingo or Mali, whom he annexed at about the same moment that the emigrant Mussulmans of Ghana founded Walata or breathed new life into it, about 1224. But this annexation proved to be only momentary and sounded the death knell of the power and even the life of Sumanguru. Soon after, to be sure, a young and active king, the famous Sundiata, succeeded his feeble brothers at Manding and, about 1235, fought and killed Sumanguru not far from Koulikoro and in turn annexed to his State that of the Soso and pushed on as far as Ghana, which he completely destroyed in 1240.

The necessity of following out the destinies of the State of Ghana and the results of Islamization due to the Almoravides has led us rather far and now we must turn back six centuries to take up the history of the Empire of Songhoy or Gao.

### *The Beginnings of the Songhoy Empire*

In the seventh century of our era, while still one of the princes of the white race reigned over the already ancient kingdom of Ghana, another State was founded on the western stretch of the Niger which was also called upon to exercise, although



very much later, the hegemony of the larger part of the Sudan. The Berbers, it is believed, who were perhaps Christians, made themselves recognized as chiefs of a small population of fishermen residing at Gunguia or Kukia, on the island of Bentia or opposite to this island, at some 150 kilometers downstream from Gao. Their dynasty, called the *Dia* or *Za*, remained in power from 690 to 1335. Toward the year 1000, they transferred their capital from Gunguia to Gao, which had existed already at that time for several hundred years, and their kingdom took the name of Songhoy or Songhai, which was also, it seems, that of the inhabitants. At this epoch the kingdom was strictly limited to the borders and the islands of the Niger, from Bamba in the north as far as the northern limits of Nupe in the south, and to a strip of territory situated to the East of the river. It was about the same date that the *Dia* then reigning, Kossoi or Kossai, was converted to Islamism.

Little by little the influence of the Songhoy was felt as far as the region of Timbuktu, the founding of which as a city goes back to the twelfth century. Their influence was also felt as far as the zone of the lakes and the inundations of the Niger and even to Walata.

However, a powerful rival rose up in the west, on the western stretch of the Niger: the empire of the Mandingo or Mali. In 1325, the troops of the Mandingo emperor Gongo-Mussa or Kankan-Mussa captured Gao and the Songhoy became vassals of the Mandingo. Ten years later, the dynasty of the

*Dia* was replaced by that of the *Sonni*, *Soun*, *San* or *Chi*, who belonged, moreover, to the same family and whose first act was to break the lines of vassalage which attached the Songhoy to the Mandingo; at any rate, Timbuktu and Walata remained in the power of the latter State, as did also the region of the lakes, the Massina and Jenne. A century afterwards, in 1433, the Tuareg chief Akil succeeded in driving the Mandingo garrison from Timbuktu and in making himself master of the city; then, January 30, 1468, the *Sonni* Ali, called the Great, captured the famous city from the Tuareg and about 1473 made himself master of Jenne and of the Massina, after having annexed to his kingdom the region of the lakes and Walata, thus for the first time giving to Songhoy an extension which made of it a redoubtable competitor for Manding.

However, while Ali, drunk with his conquests, passed his time in debauchery and in persecuting the Mussulmans—Mussulman himself, though he was, he left a reputation for impiety among his coreligionists—the king of the Mossi of Yatenga came to ravage the Massina (1477) and advanced as far as Walata which he pillaged (1480). This hardy incursion across his kingdom made the *Sonni* Ali reflect, and he found nothing better, to enable him in the future to relieve Walata rapidly, than to connect this city with Timbuktu by a canal starting from Ras-el-ma which was to measure nearly 250 kilometers in length. While he was beginning to have it dug, he was informed that the Mossi of the Yatenga had again invaded his States; he immediately marched

against them and succeeded in making them retrace their steps, but in the course of the expedition he was drowned crossing a torrent, November 6, 1492.

Here we will leave the history of the Songhoy, which we will take up again in the following chapters, and we shall see what happened from the seventh to the fifteenth century on the upper Niger and at the interior of the bend of this river.

### *The Mandingo Empire*

On the left bank of the upper Niger, nearly midway between Siguiri and Bamako, is the village of Kangaba, also called *Joliba* or *Jéliba*, from the name of the great river on the borders of which it is situated.<sup>1</sup> This village serves as the customary residence of the chief of a Mandingo or Malinke family of the Keïta group which has exercised the power there for more than thirteen centuries, with a single interruption of fifteen years from 1285 to 1300. It is probably the most ancient dynasty of the world still in power. Only, after having been a simple chief of a canton, then head of a kingdom and finally

<sup>1</sup> The word *joli-ba* in the Malinke dialect and *jéli-ba* in the Bambara dialect signifies "river of blood." This name has been given to the Niger because of the bloody sacrifices which took place and still take place on its banks or on the waters themselves, at various points in its course, on the occasion of certain seasonal festivals. It is in error that "river of the griot" or "river of the griots" has been proposed and accepted as the etymology of this name, for it would have been pronounced *jéli-ba*—and not *jéli-ba*—in all the dialects and could never have given place to the reading *joli-ba*. Blood is pronounced *joli* or *juli* in Malinke, *jéli* in Bambara, *juri*, *jori* or *jéri* in Jula, and the name of the river is actually *Joli-ba* or *Juli-ba* in the first of these dialects, *Jéli-ba* in the second, *Juri-ba* or *Jéri-ba* in the third.

of a veritable empire, the *mansa* of Kangaba has descended the curve, becoming again a modest king or chief of a province, to be nothing more to-day than the humble chief of a canton, as was his most distant ancestor toward the beginning of the seventh century.

However, this little village of the upper Niger was, during several hundreds of years, the principal capital of the vastest empire that was ever known in Africa and of one of the most considerable that has ever existed in the whole world, the empire of the Mandingo or Mande or, to employ the name which Arab historians and geographers have bequeathed to us and which is only the Fulani form of the word "Mande," the empire of the *Mali* or *Melli*.

Manding or Mande is properly the province of which Kangaba is the capital and in which are found the famous gold mines of Bouré or Bouté, the Bitu of Arab authors. Its inhabitants bore, according to the dialect, the name of Mandenga, Mandinga or Mandingo, from which we have made "Mandingue" [Mandingo in English] as that of the people, and "Manding" as the name of the country; they are called Malinke by the Fulani, a form which we have adopted to designate the Mandingo, properly speaking, and their dialect, reserving the appellation of "Mandingo" or "Mande" for the whole of the population called Wangara by the Arabs.

For several centuries, the *mansa* or kings of Manding carried on an obscure existence at Kangaba when, about 1050, the one who then reigned was

converted to Islamism by an Almoravide, made a pilgrimage to Mecca and began to enter into relations with the neighboring states which were favorable to the growth of his power and to the development of his country, at the same time ceasing to consider himself a vassal of the Empire of Ghana. Until then it was principally the Bambuk who furnished the gold-dust for the commerce which enriched Ghana and who undertook an active and continual exchange of products between the Sudan and North Africa. The Almoravides having learned the road to Manding and having taught it to the Moroccan caravans, it was the Bouré which, from now on, became the principal source of production for the precious metal which contributed no little to fill the treasury of the king of Manding and to open up new horizons for its people.

We learn from several authors that, in 1213, a *mansa* of Manding, named according to some, Mussa, and according to others, Allakoy, made a pilgrimage to Mecca. During his reign he returned there three times, travels which did not fail to increase his prestige and which indicate that he disposed of a certain fortune.

But the riches of the king of Kangaba and the reputation of the gold mines of the Bouré excited envy. Profiting by the weakness of the immediate successors of Mussa, called Allakoy, the king of Soso, Sumanguru, undertook and accomplished, about 1224, the conquest of Manding, which he brutally annexed to his state. However, Sundiata Keïta, also called Maridiata, grandson of Mussa,

resolved to make his country independent, which he succeeded in doing. After procuring the alliance of the Mandingo chiefs who resided in the west, south and east of Kangaba and bringing them voluntarily or by force to obey him, he recruited from among them the elements of a powerful army, at the head of which he marched against his ephemeral suzerain. The two princes met in 1235 at Kirina, not far from Koulikoro, near the Niger, where Sumanguru was defeated and killed. Without losing any time, Sundiata continued his victorious march, entered Soso as master, pushed on as far as Ghana which he took and destroyed (1240), chiefly with the aim of bringing upon himself the renown that attached to that ancient capital of a glorious empire, thus destroying the base of a powerful State. He was not content to be a great warrior: tradition says that he gave all his efforts to the development of agriculture, that he introduced into his country the raising and weaving of cotton and that he caused the most absolute security to reign from one end of his kingdom to the other. This remarkable prince perished in his capital in 1255, the victim of an accident during a public festival.

His successor, the *mansa* Oule, renewed the tradition inaugurated by Baramendana and went to Mecca, at the same time carrying farther West the limits of the nascent empire and incorporating into it the Bambuk, the Boundu and the larger part of the valley of the Gambia.

From 1285 to 1300 reigned a usurper, the only one who is mentioned in the course of the long line of

the Keïta. He was a serf named Sakura. But he continued the work of his masters and predecessors, pushing the Mandingo conquest toward the North-East in the Massina and the province of Jenne and toward the North-West as far as the lower Senegal, disputing the Tekrur with the kings of Diara and making vassals of them, engaging in direct commercial relations with Tripolitania and Morocco and also accomplishing the pilgrimage to Mecca, only to be assassinated on his return, near Jibuti, by the Danakil who grudged him his gold. His companions dried his body to conserve it and brought it back by the Wadai as far as Kuka, in Bornu; the king of the latter country sent out messengers to Manding to inform the court and people of the news and an embassy was dispatched from Kangaba to Kuka to bring back the remains of Sakura; he was given the honor of royal burial of the Keïta. His people owed him this testimony of their admiration and gratitude.

The Keïta again occupied the throne. One of them, Gongo-Mussa or Kankan-Mussa, who reigned from 1307 to 1332, brought the power of the Mandingo empire to its apogee. Toward the end of his life, in 1324, he went to Mecca with a great cortège, passing by the Tuat and Cairo and arousing interest and curiosity everywhere along the route. In the Holy Land he met an Arab of a Granada family, named Ibrahim-es-Saheli, whom he persuaded to accompany him to the Sudan. The return took place the following year, by Ghadames, where El-Mamar, a descendant of the founder of the dynasty of the

Almohades, had gone to meet the Negro sovereign; at the latter's invitation, El-Mamer joined the imperial cortège and went with it as far as Manding.

Before Gonga-Mussa had time to arrive at the Niger, he learned that, in his absence his lieutenant Sagamandia had just captured Gao (1325); so he decided to enter the city to receive the homage of the *Dia* Assibai, who gave him his two sons as hostages, one of whom was to return to Gao ten years later to found the dynasty of the *Sonni* and shake off the tutelage of the Manding. As El-Mamer showed that he was shocked at the mediocrity of the building—a simple straw-roofed hut—which served as a mosque for the Mussulmans of Gao, the *mansa* invited Es-Saheli, who combined the profession of architect with that of poet, to build a house of prayer more worthy of the Most High. So Es-Saheli constructed at Gao a brick mosque with a crenelated flat roof and a pyramidal minaret which, according to tradition, must have been the first Sudanese edifice of this type so extensively found to-day.

Gongo-Mussa then went to Timbuktu, which he annexed to his empire at the same time as Walata. At Timbuktu, Es-Saheli likewise built a mosque with a flat roof and a minaret; he also constructed there a great square building, with a flat roof and a cupola, to serve as an audience room for the sovereign of Manding when he should wish to sojourn at Timbuktu. This building was called the *madugu* (ground of the master) and its site is still pointed out to-day. It was the occasion of an important transformation in Sudanese architecture: until then, according to



El-Mamer, who later narrated his journey to his friend Ibn Kaldoun, the only constructions that were known were cylindrical huts with conical roofs of straw, still scattered about in our day in nearly all of Negro Africa. At Ghana itself, according to Bekri, this was the only type of habitation that had ever existed aside from the stone houses of the royal quarters; at Timbuktu, at Jenne, at Kangaba, it was the same. The *madugu* and the mosques built by Es-Saheli were found to be remarkable. There was an effort to imitate them in all Sudanese centers and this type of construction, to which an Egyptian origin has been erroneously attributed, soon became generalized and penetrated even to the barbarous populations of the Valley of the Volta, where it assumed the somewhat special aspect of a sort of fortified castle.

It is told that Gongo-Mussa, very much satisfied with the work of his architect, gave him in payment 12,000 mithkals of gold, according to Ibn Kaldoun, or 40,000 mithkals according to Ibn Batuta, that is to say, 54 kilos of the precious metal according to the former or 180 kilos according to the latter. Es-Saheli followed his generous master as far as Kangaba, constructing for him another *madugu* en route at Niani, which was at this epoch the second capital of the Empire and the site of which is shown, still designated under the name of "Niani-Madugu," between Niamina and Koulikoro. After this the Arab architect returned to Timbuktu where he died in 1346.

Gongo-Mussa himself had died in 1332. At this

date the Mandingo empire occupied nearly the same area as the whole of the territories of French West Africa and the foreign colonies enclosed by them, with the exception of the southern countries covered by the dense forest and the regions situated at the center of the Bend of the Niger. The master of this immense Negro state was in friendly and constant relations with the greatest Mussulman potentates of North Africa, notably with the Merinide sultan of Morocco. Shortly before his death, Gongo-Mussa had sent an embassy to Fez, to congratulate Abul-Hassane on the victory that he had just had over Tlemcen, and the sultan of Fez had in return dispatched one to Manding, where it arrived in 1336 under the reign of the *mansa* Suleiman (1336-1359); the latter not wishing to be outdone in politeness sent sumptuous presents to his Moroccan colleague.

It was under the reign of this Suleiman that the celebrated Arab traveler and geographer Ibn Batuta visited Manding, in 1352-53, from Walata to the capital of the Empire, returning by Timbuktu, Gao, Air and the Tuat. He has left us a detailed and apparently scrupulous account of his travels in which he is pleased to testify to the fine administration of the State, its prosperity, the courtesy and the discipline of its officials and provincial governors, the excellent condition of public finance, the luxury and the rigorous and complicated ceremonial of the royal receptions, the respect accorded to the decisions of justice and to the authority of the sovereign. In reading his account, one has the impression that the Mandingo Empire was a real State, whose organization

and civilization could be compared to those of the Mussulman kingdoms or indeed to the Christian kingdoms of the same epoch.

The great historian Ibn Kaldoun, being at Biskra in 1353, learned from well informed persons that the power of the *mansa* of the Mali extended over the entire Sahara, that the king of Wargla showed deference to him and all the Tuareg paid him tribute.

However, Gao had recovered its independence between the death of Gongo-Mussa and the arrival of Suleiman and, about a century later, the Mandingo Empire began to decline under the blows of the Songhoy, at the same time preserving enough of its power and prestige so that its sovereign and the king of the Portuguese, then at the height of his glory, treated with one another as equals.

### *The Mossi Empires*

About the same epoch at which the *mansa* Bara-mendana embraced the Islamic faith, that is to say, about the middle of the eleventh century, other Negro States were being created, aside from all foreign or Mussulman influence, in the central part of the Bend of the Niger, there where the density of population seems to have always been considerable and where it exceeds, in our day, that of all the other regions of the Sudan: I mean the *Mossi* States. There were in fact two of them and there are still two of them to-day. One, whose sovereign resided at Wagadugu, was founded toward 1050 by an adventurer named Ubri; the other, with several successive capitals, including Wahiguya, was not defini-

tively organized till toward 1170 by one named Ya, in memory of whom it was called Yatenga (land of Ya). The fact that the monarchs of the two kingdoms bore the same title (*morho-naba*, that is to say, "chief of the country of the Mossi") and that the principal and dominant population of the one and the other is composed of Mossi has caused them to be mistaken for the same; however, these two States have always been distinct and independent of each other.

Each one of them took a certain time to be formed and to attain its full development, but it seems established that, toward the beginning of the fourteenth century, they had nearly the same extent of territory and the same organization as to-day. Each consists of several kingdoms, one of which exercises the hegemony over the others and each kingdom is divided into a certain number of provinces at the head of each of which is placed a governor, who resides sometimes in his own province and sometimes at the court of the king or *naba*.

So it is that the Mossi empire of Wagadugu comprises four vassal kingdoms, besides the kingdom depending directly on the emperor or *morho-naba*. The latter kingdom is composed of five provinces whose governors at the same time make up the imperial council, one in the capacity of comptroller, the second as chief of the eunuchs, the third as chief of the infantry, the fourth as chief of the cavalry, and the fifth as guardian of the royal sepultures. This council is completed by eleven ministers or grand dignitaries: the grand-master of the army, the

commandant of the imperial guard, the grand-priest of the local religion, the master of ceremonies, the chief of the servants, his assistant, the chief of the musicians, the chief of the butchers, the chief of the royal stables, the collector of taxes and finally the trustee for the Mussulmans. Each of these offices, as that of governor, is hereditary in a given family. Each governor of a province has, like the *morhonaba* and like the vassal *naba*, his court of dignitaries and ministers.

This organization which still functions in our day at Wagadugu and at Yatenga, strangely resembles that which, according to what has been told us by Arab authors and the writers of Timbuktu, existed at Ghana, at Diara, at Gao and at Manding, as well as what could formerly be observed at Coomassie, at Abomey, in certain States of sub-equatorial Africa and also what can be studied in some of the little kingdoms of the Senegal, principally the Jolof, and elsewhere. This seems to constitute the type, perhaps more perfected at Mossi than elsewhere, of all the States worthy of that name, great or small, that have been developed all across Negro Africa since the most remote antiquity. Without doubt it is not inopportune to remark in this matter: if the Empires of Ghana and Gao pass for having been founded by whites, without, however, the fact being absolutely certain, if they were later headed by Sarakolle dynasties (the Sisse at Ghana, the Touré at Gao) who claimed to have whites among their ancestors, if the Mandingo empire, founded and directed by Negroes of probably pure race, could nevertheless

have benefited by some foreign influence through the canal of Islamism, if the kingdoms of Ashanti and Dahomey, as those of the Senegal and of the Congo, might have received some inspiration from the Europeans, it seems very certain that the Mossi empires have always been sheltered from all non-Negro interference as well as non-Negro influence and consequently the political institutions which characterize them and which are found almost all over Negro Africa are of indigenous origin. At most, it might be suggested that the first in date of these States, that of Ghana, had afterwards been more or less imitated by its neighbors, then by the neighbors of these, without the latter being conscious of the imitation.

Contrary to the Empires of Ghana, of the Songhoy and of Manding, the Mossi States were not distinguished by extensive territorial conquests. However, that of Yatenga asserted its power on more than one occasion: in 1333, the year following the death of Gongo Mussa, the *mohro-naba* of the Yatenga attacked Timbuktu and sacked the city; in 1477, one of his successors made incursions into the Massina and the Bagana and pillaged Walata in 1480. Later the Mossi victoriously resisted the *askia* of Gao, then the pashas of Timbuktu, and troubled the sovereigns of Manding and the Bambara kings of Segou. But their distant expeditions were only ephemeral attacks not followed by annexation. The history of these States unrolls almost entirely within their own frontiers but, to counterbalance this, they were never seriously attacked, and

even the French occupation respected them, contenting itself with imposing a sort of protectorate on the *morho-naba* of the Wagadugu and of the Yatenga.

The Mossi empires are curious for still another thing; they have at all times constituted an impregnable rampart against the extension of Islamism, which has never had any hold on them. Although counting among their subjects a certain number of Mussulmans all of whom were foreigners, and having created for these Mussulmans a special minister at the court of the *morha-naba*, they have remained profoundly attached to the old local religion and rightly pass as representing, in all its integrity, a civilization which is uniquely and really Negro.

This is, briefly sketched, almost all that we know of the history of Negro Africa during the Middle Ages. Assuredly, there have existed, during this long period, other Negro States than those which we have mentioned; but either they were States of the second order whose history there is little interest in recounting in a general work, or else we know nothing of them but their name and, more often, we are ignorant even of this much. Thus it is, that what it is possible to say of the African Negroes before the fifteenth century is reduced approximately to what concerns the Negroes of the western Sudan.

For the rest, aside from some notions about Bornu, we barely know anything except what has been told us by Arab authors about the prosperity of the colonies founded by their compatriots and the

Hindu traffickers on the coast of Zanzibar, a prosperity which seems to have attained a high degree in the Middle Ages, but which had its principal source in the slave trade and from which the civilization of the African peoples in no way profited.

## CHAPTER III

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## CHAPTER IV

### WEST AFRICA FROM THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY TO OUR DAY

MORE ABUNDANT DOCUMENTATION—THE MANDINGO AND SONGHOY EMPIRES—THE ASKIA MOHAMMED—KOLI-TENGELLA—THE LAST ASKIAS—THE PASHAS OF TIMBUKTU—THE BAMBARA KINGDOMS—THE TUKULOR CONQUEST—THE WANDERINGS OF SAMORI—THE PEOPLES OF THE WEST COAST—THE PEOPLES OF THE BEND OF THE NIGER

#### *More Abundant Documentation*

It is in the fourteenth century that European navigators began to land at a few places along the coast of tropical Africa, but it is hardly till the following century and especially in the sixteenth that relations were established between the Negroes and the whites and that somewhat rounded details reached Europe touching the newly discovered countries and their inhabitants.

However, compared to the preceding period, we have other and more abundant sources of information on the condition of Negro Africa subsequent to the Middle Ages. There are, to begin with, the recitals of the first navigators, such as Cadamosto; then there are those of the Arab traveler, Leo the African, whose work, less documented than the books of the previous Mussulman geographers but better known because of its Italian and French editions, constituted, at least in what concerns Berbery, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Sudan, the basis of numer-

nished him with military contingents. Some fifty years later, the Wolofs declared to the Portuguese, Diego Gomez, that all the country that they knew belonged to the *mansa* of Manding. Cadamosto, in 1455, confirms the fact that in the middle of the fifteenth century the power of the latter extended as far as the lower Gambia.

However, in 1435, the Tuareg chief Akil captured Arawan, Timbuktu and Walata. A little later the emperor of Gao, Ali the Great, after having taken Timbuktu from the Tuareg in 1468, entered Jenne as conqueror toward 1473 and took away from the authority of the *mansa* a good part of the Massina, where the Fulani coming from Termes, obeying a chief of the Diallo family, had settled about the beginning of the fifteenth century with the authorization of the Mandingo governor of Bagana.

Soon after, by the intermediary of the Portuguese officers Rio de Cantor (Gambia) and Elmina (Gold Coast), there took place an exchange of presents, messages and embassies between the emperor of Manding, who was then called Mamoud or Mamudu, according to Joao de Barros, and the king of Portugal, John II, who had mounted the throne in 1481, remaining there till 1495.

#### *The Askia Mohammed*

At the same epoch, in 1493, the Sonni dynasty was overturned at Gao by a Sarakolle general, Mamadu or Mohammed Touré, of the Silla group, who became invested with the sovereignty under the

title of *Askia*. He was the first prince of a new dynasty which was to last a century.

The *Askia* Mohammed reigned from 1493 to 1529. He was a remarkable monarch in all respects, knowing how to bring prosperity to his States, developing there a civilization which aroused the admiration of Leo the African, who visited the Songhoy under his reign, towards 1507. Indeed, he was very well seconded by his ministers and provincial governors, notably by his brother Amar or Omar, whom he made his *kanfâri*, that is, his principal lieutenant; but it is precisely in this choice of excellent collaborators that great kings are recognized. Giving up the system of mass levies which had been practiced by the *Sonni* Ali the Great and which prevented the peasants from working the fields, he recruited a professional army among the slaves and prisoners of war, thus leaving the farmers on their lands all the year round, the artisans at their trades and the merchants to their business. Showing a great respect for religious personages and scholars, he made of Gao, of Walata and especially of Timbuktu and of Jenne intellectual centers which radiated a brilliant luster, where the renowned writers of the Maghreb did not disdain to come to complete their studies and sometimes to settle permanently, as did the celebrated Ahmed-Baba. Jurisconsults of value, like the El-Akit and the Bagayogo, the former of the white race, the latter of the black, were educated at the schools of Timbuktu and a whole literature developed there in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, whose products are being revealed to us

little by little with the discovery of very interesting works, edited in Arabic at that epoch by the Sarakolle or Songhoy Negroes, such as the *Tarikh el-fettâch* and the *Tarikh es-Sudan*.

The *askia* Mohammed was in continuous relations with the Moroccan reformer Merhili, who corresponded with him on the subjects of religion and politics and came to visit him at Gao in 1502. This prince had made the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1497 and had profited by his journey to converse at length with Soyuti and other celebrated Mussulman doctors; he had consecrated a sum of 100,000 gold dinars to pious alms and to the purchase of land where he had a hostel built for Sudanese pilgrims; finally he reached the height of his glory in receiving from the grand cherif of Mecca, then Moulai El-Abbas, the investiture of Khalife "for the Tekrur country," that is, the Sudan. The cherif even went so far as to send to Gao one of his nephews, Moulai Es-Sekli, a native of Bagdad, as ambassador from the kingdom of the Hedjaz to the *askia*.

However, the empire of Gao reached a considerable territorial extension, mostly at the expense of the Mandingo empire. As early as 1494 Amar, brother of Mohammed, had annexed the whole of the Massina to the Songhoy, including the Fulani kingdom of the Diallo. In 1499, after having returned from Mecca and having unsuccessfully attempted the conquest of Yatenga, the *askia* himself captured the Bagana; in 1501, he conquered a part of the kingdom of Diara and, in 1508, he pushed

on as far as Galam, that is to say, to the country of the Bakal on the Senegal.

*Koli-Tengella*

About the same epoch the Fulani chief Tengella, called by the title of *ardo* by his compatriots and that of *silatigui* or *siratigui* by the Mandingo, wandered from Termes to Kingui (province of Diara and of Nioro). Supported, probably, by the emperor of Manding, he preached a revolt against the *askia* and made war on the king of Diara because the latter had accepted the suzerainty of the Songhoy. The army of the *askia*, commanded by his brother Amar, marched against Tengella and pursued him as far as Diara, where it defied and killed him in 1512. The bands of the Fulani chief were rehabilitated under the command of his son Koli, who, it is said, descended on his mother's side from the Mandingo emperors; they took refuge in the Badiar, to the North-West of the Futa-Jallon.

It is from here that Koli, at the head of his Fulani and numerous Mandingo partisans, must have departed a little later to wrest the Futa-Toro from the last Sarakolle governors dependent on Diara, there founding a kingdom which he enlarged at the expense of the Kaniaga and of the eastern part of the Jolof, and installing a Fulani or pagan dynasty, called the *Denianke*, who maintained the power from 1559 to 1776. The princes of this dynasty, like their ancestor Tengella, bore the title of *silatigui* or *siratigui*, becoming "siratique" in the accounts of French travelers and *sitigui* in the language of the

country. The *mansa* who then reigned in Manding, Mamudu II, had implored the aid of King John III of Portugal against the encroachments of Koli-Tengella on what he still considered a part of his States; but John III contented himself with sending to Mamudu II, in 1534, a simple ambassador, Peros Fernandez, instead of an army.

### *The Last Askias*

Having despoiled Manding of most of its northern dependencies, the *askia* Mohammed wanted to pursue his conquests toward the East and penetrated the country of the Hausa, but there he was less fortunate. First, with the aid of the *kanta* or king of the Kebbi, he took Katsena (1513) and imposed his suzerainty on the king of Agades (1515), but he was then defeated by his ally the *kanta*, who, having become his enemy (1517), seized the larger portion of the Hausa provinces. About a century afterwards, the latter were to recover their independence and the Aïr or the province of Agades was to become again what it formerly had been, vassal to the Tuareg.

The *askia* Mohammed, however, had become blind and, August 15, 1529, he was dethroned by his own son Mussa. With this latter began a series of intestine struggles, civil wars, pillage and debauches, odious massacres and useless military expeditions which desolated the Songhoy and little by little ruined the magnificent edifice built up by the first *askia*. One of the sons of the latter, Daoud, who reigned from 1549 to 1583, tried to react against the

habits of sanguinary tyranny and extravagant expenditures that had been introduced at the court of Gao since the time of his brother Mussa; he reawakened interest in agriculture, encouraged science and study, and was able to gain the friendship of the Sultan of Morocco, Ahmed Ed-Dehebi, who wore mourning at his death. He further became celebrated by acts of charity and generosity. But the days of the Songhoy were counted.

Languishing Manding was no longer to be feared. This State had fallen so low that Daoud could, in 1545-46, before mounting the throne of Gao, push the Songhoy army as far as the Mandingo capital—we do not know whether it was Niani or Kangaba—which he entered after having put the *mansa* to flight, remaining there a week and making the soldiers of the imperial residence fulfill his orders.

#### *The Pashas of Timbuktu*

But it was from Morocco that the fatal blow came to the Empire of Gao. For a long time, the Sultans of the Maghreb envied the Songhoy emperors their possessions of salt at Tegaza, in the neighborhood of those which are to-day exploited at Taodeni, to the South-West of the Tuat. At his accession (1578), the Sultan Ahmed Ed-Dehebi had obtained from the *askia* Daoud, for 10,000 gold dinars, the privilege of exploiting these salt beds for his own account during one year. The profit that he obtained was such that he resolved to make himself sole master of them and, after the death of Daoud, he sent to Gao, to the court of the latter's successor,

an embassy whose mission it was to gather information about the military forces of the Songhoy; at the same time he sent out an army of 20,000 men in the region of Tegaza which, however, was completely decimated by hunger and thirst. In 1585, he had 200 infantry occupy the salt lands but, not being able to nourish themselves there, they soon returned to Morocco. However he held to his project and became even more ambitious; he no longer coveted only the salt of the Sahara, but also the gold of the Sudan, this gold whose so-called conquest gained for him the surname by which he is known.<sup>1</sup>

In 1590, he sent out a column of infantry armed with muskets, the majority of whom were not Moroccans, as was for a long time believed, but Spanish renegades commanded by one of them named Juder, who was promoted for the occasion to the rank of pasha. The Spaniards received from the Arabs or Arabized inhabitants of Timbuktu the surname of *Rumat* or *Arma* (throwers of projectiles), and the latter word is still borne to-day in this city and this region by the members of a sort of noble caste who, although now true Negroes, claim to be descended from the warriors of Juder.

These warriors had left Marrakech on October 29, 1590, to the number of 3,000. When they arrived at the banks of the Niger, March 1, 1591, they were no more than a thousand but they had firearms, a thing until then unknown in the Sudan and, thanks to their muskets, they could easily triumph over the

<sup>1</sup> Ed-dchebi signifies in Arabic "the gilded one" or the "master of the gold."



imposing army of the *askia* Issahak or Ishak II near Tondibi between Burem and Gao, March 12, 1591. The latter counted 30,000 infantry and 12,500 cavalry according to the *Tarikh es-Sudan* but only 9,700 infantry and 18,000 cavalry according to the *Tarikh el-fettâch*, but it had only swords, javelins, lances and shields of leather or braided straw to oppose to the balls of the Spanish renegades. The *askia* had indeed taken the precaution to have cows put between the enemy and his own troops, in order to cover them, but the unfortunate beasts, maddened by the fire of the musketry, took flight, precipitated themselves with lowered heads on the Songhoy warriors and only contributed to hasten their rout, which was complete.

The *askia*, abandoned by his ministers and relatives, took refuge at Gurma, where he was assassinated by the inhabitants. Juder entered Gao without meeting any new resistance but, only moderately charmed by the aspect of this Negro village and finding, as he wrote to the Sultan Ahmed, that the house of the chief of the ass-drivers of Marrakech was worth more than that of the palace of the *askia*, he went on to establish himself at Timbuktu, which he entered April 25, 1591. The empire of the Songhoy had become such that a thousand Spaniards armed with guns sufficed to lay it low.

Then began what was very improperly called the "Moroccan domination of the Sudan": first, there was no domination except over a small part of the former Songhoy, in the riparian region of the Niger from Jenne to Gao, all the upstream region called

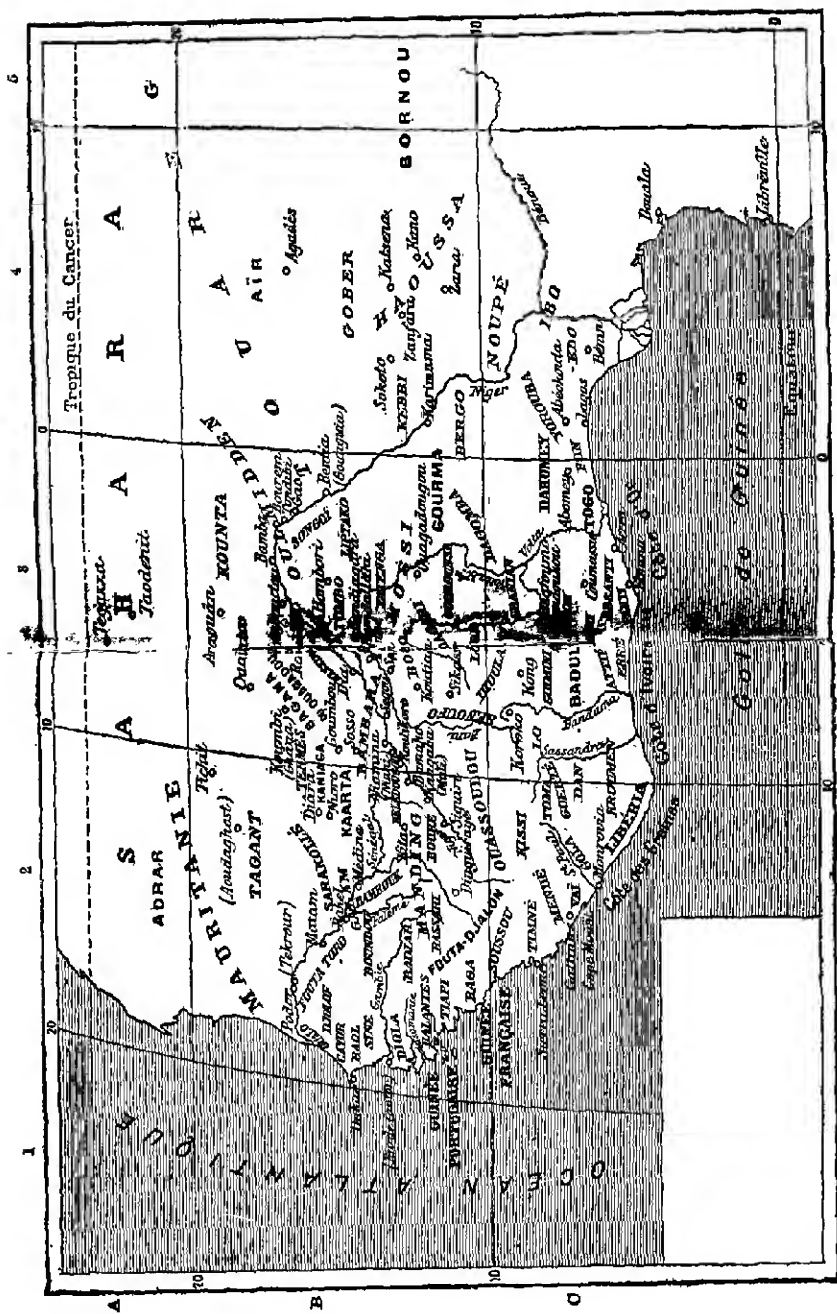
Dendi having preserved its autonomy with an independent *askia* at its head; moreover this domination lasted only 70 years, at the end of which the authority of the pashas had become entirely null outside of the city of Timbuktu; finally it could not be called "Moroccan," because only the pashas of the first 22 years (1591-1612) were, in part at least, designated by the Sultan of Morocco; the orders of the latter were never executed, even by the first pashas, and the taxes levied on the inhabitants were never sent to Marrakech; the other pashas, who succeeded one another to the number of 21 during 48 years (1612-1660), were brought to power either by themselves or by their soldiers and, like them, were so little Moroccan that the majority of them did not understand Arabic, the language they made use of among themselves being Spanish, later becoming Songhoy, as we are told by the *Tarikh el-jettâch*.

The *mansa* Mamudu III, in 1599, wanted to profit by the anarchy which had reigned since the defeat of the *askia* Issahak II and attempted, with the aid of Hamadu-Amina, chief of the Fulani of the Masina, to capture Jenne. The pasha Ammar sent his soldiers against them. The Mandingo and the Fulani bravely resisted the fire of the Arma, but the intervention of the inhabitants of Jenne, who sided against Mamudu, obliged him and his allies to beat a retreat. At all events, this demonstration of the Mandingo emperor sufficed to cause the pashas to respect him in the future.

In reality, the conquerors led to the Sudan by Juder and his first successors formed a troop of

men who, after having put themselves at the orders of the Sultan of Morocco, in denying their faith and their country with the hope of profitable adventures, gave free course to their instincts, once left to themselves in the Sudan. They were especially notable for their anarchy and their lack of discipline, their rapines, their cupidity, their debauchery, their persecutions of Musulmans and scholars and their talent for disorganization. The intervention of this scum of Europe was one of the saddest blows that had been given to Sudanese civilization. According to the best Mussulmans of Timbuktu, the régime of the pashas, if it had lasted longer, would have brought total ruin to what had been painfully erected by the *mansa* of Manding and some of the *askias* of Gao.

After 1660, this régime no longer raged except at Timbuktu, which had to submit to the caprices of these mixed Spaniards and Negroes for another 120 years. The *Tedz-kiret en-nisiân* enumerated 128 of these pretended pashas for the period of 90 years from 1660-1750: these figures eloquently characterize the régime. From about 1660, all the petty tyrants who had the audacity to have public prayers said in their name at the mosques, conserved a semblance of authority only on condition of paying tribute to the Bambara king of Segou, who made the law to the South, or of pouring forth heavy contributions to the Tuareg Oulmidden who ruled in the North and who did not abstain from pillaging Timbuktu each time that hunger pressed them. After 1780, the very title of pasha disappeared and there was nothing more



at Timbuktu than a sort of mayor, chosen among the *Arma*, sometimes by the Bambara, sometimes by the Tuareg, sometimes by the Fulani of the Massina, according as one or the other was master for the day. For the city it was a period of continual insecurity and profound misery which was not to come to an end till a little more than a century later, in 1894, with the occupation of the old Sudanese city by Major Joffre, to-day<sup>1</sup> Marshal of France.

### *The Bambara Kingdoms*

I have just spoken of the Bambara as exercising the authority to the South of Timbuktu, dating from about 1660. This people, a branch of the Wangara group, spread out on both sides of the Niger from Bamako to the region of Jenne and the Massina, had been at first subject to Manding, becoming, at least in part, vassal to the Songhoy from the epoch of the *Sonni* Ali the Great and especially that of the *askia* Mohammed. Having gained their independence toward the middle of the seventeenth century, they then formed two States. One had its capital at Segou and extended along the Niger between this river and the Bani; the other called Kaarta, had its domain to the West of the first, at the North of the upper Senegal. At first, both were governed by princes of the same family, that of the Kulubali, the western portion bearing the name of Kulubali-Masasi.

Toward 1660, the king Biton Kulubali settled at Segou. The *mansa* of Manding, who was then Mama-

<sup>1</sup> [1922.]

Magan, wanted to destroy in his nest this neighbor whom he guessed to be dangerous and about 1667 he attacked the fortress built by Biton. The siege still continued in 1670 and Mama-Magan, despairing of its coming to an end, retired, following the right bank of the Niger; Biton pursued him as far up as Niani, cornered him at the river and forced him to conclude a treaty by the terms of which the Mandingo sovereign engaged himself not to advance in the future downstream from Niamina, Biton, on his side, promising not to go upstream from this point. This event marked the end of the Mandingo empire, which from now on, reduced to the Malinke provinces of the upper Niger and the upper Gambia, ceased to count among the powerful States of Negro Africa.

Biton raised a professional army on the pattern of those of the *askias*, by means of *ton-dion* or government slaves, and organized a State flotilla, utilizing the fishermen, called Somono, and their small craft. He set his authority solidly on all the countries between Niamina and Jenne, captured the Bagana, and imposed his suzerainty on the Massina and Timbuktu. In 1710, he died of tetanus resulting from an accident, and with him his dynasty came to an end.

In fact, his army massacred his children and relatives and took over the power; but it became divided, part sustaining the chief of the infantry and the other part the master of the cavalry, until a servant of the former royal family, named Ngolo or Molo Diara, succeeded in having himself proclaimed king

and founded a new dynasty (1750). One of his successors, Monson (1792-1808), made himself especially celebrated by the war that he waged on his congeners, the Bambara of the Kaarta, and by a punitive expedition that he conducted in 1803 to Timbuktu, following the refusal of this city to pay its annual tribute to Segu.

*It was under his successor Da that the Massina freed itself from Bambara suzerainty to constitute an independent kingdom under the command of the Fulani marabout Seku-Hamadu, of the Bari or Sangaré family (1810). The latter captured Jenne, constructed a capital at Hamdallahi on the right bank of the Bani, and wisely organized the administration and the finances of his kingdom. He converted to Islamism the Fulani who until then had obeyed an ardo of the Diallo family and succeeded in substituting at Timbuktu his own influence for that of the king of the Bambara at Segu. In fact, he captured Timbuktu in 1826 or 1827, but his compatriots were hated and the Fulani garrison which had been installed there could not remain. He was to have only two successors: his son Hamadu-Seku and his grandson Hamadu-Hamadu, who was vanquished and put to death in 1862 by the Tukulor conqueror El-Hadj Omar.*

As for the Bambara kingdom of Segu, it disappeared at the same epoch and in the same fashion as the Fulani kingdom of the Massina: El-Hadj Omar, in fact, conquered Segu, March 10, 1861, and the following year he seized Ali himself, the last king of the Diara dynasty, who having taken refuge

with Hamadu-Hamadu, had, in the face of the common danger, become the ally of his former enemy.

The Bambara kingdom of Kaarta had an even shorter duration. Its beginnings went back, like those of the kingdom of Segou, to 1660 or 1670. Less than a century afterwards, in 1754, King Sié captured Diara. His successors became masters of the *greater part of the other provinces* situated to the north of the upper Senegal and took Bambuk and Kita from the Mandingo.

#### *The Tukulor Conquest*

It was towards the same epoch, in 1776, that a revolution took place in the Futa-Toro which was to give a powerful impetus to the Islamization of the Senegalese peoples. The Tukulor Negroes, the majority of whom had been Mussulmans for six centuries, triumphed over the pagan Fulani; the *iman*, or *almani* Abdulkader achieved a decisive victory over Soule-Bubu, the last prince of the Denianke dynasty founded by Koli, and established in the Futa-Toro a theocratic State, in the form of an elective monarchy, which was to last until 1881, the date of its annexation to the French colony of the Senegal.

However, the Bambara-Masasi had continued to progress and toward 1810 they succeeded in momentarily establishing their suzerainty over the Khasso (region of Kayes), where the Diallo, half Fulani and half Mandingo, had founded a little State. In 1846, Kandia, king of the Bambara of the Kaarta, had established his capital at Nioro, but in 1854, this capital was taken by El-Hadj Omar, Kan-



dia was put to death by the Tukulor conqueror and the kingdom of the Masasi ceased to exist.

This El-Hadj Omar, who thus captured three powerful States in the space of eight years, was a Tukulor of the Torodo caste, the one which had directed a movement of revolt against the Denianke. Born at Aloar, in the province of Podor, about 1797, he undertook, in 1820, a journey to Mecca where he was received into the brotherhood of the Tijania and invested with the title of "Khalife" for the Sudan; on his return he sojourned with the Kanemi, master of Bornu, with Mohammed-Bello, the Tukulor emperor of the Sokoto, and with Seku-Hamadu, the Fulani king of the Massina. Returning to West Africa only in 1838, he first settled in the Futa-Jallon, then in 1848 at Dinguiray, where he was actively occupied in constituting an army. He was not long in forcing the Mandingo to submit to his authority, capturing the Bambuk, and then under the pretext of converting the Bambara, who had always remained pagans as they are still to-day, he marched against the Masasi and entered Nioro as conqueror (1854).

After having made propositions of alliance, which were repulsed, to Hamadu-Hamadu, then king of the Masasi, and to Turukoro-Mari, the Bambara king of Segou, he turned against the Khasso and came, in April, 1857, with some 20,000 men to besiege Medine, the capital of this State. The siege was sustained during three months with a rare valiance by Dinka-Sambala, king of the Khasso, and the French mulatto Paul Holle, commandant of the fort

that the French possessed in that locality. Governor Faidherbe arrived July 18 with reënforcements and put to flight El-Hadj Omar. The latter, in passing by the Boundu and the Futa-Toro, attacked in vain the French post of Matam in 1859, where he found himself face to face with Paul Holle. He then returned to Nioro, marched against the Beledugu and, after a whole series of combats between the Bambara and the Fulani, captured Segou, March 10, 1861. Without resting, he turned his arms against Hamadu-Hamadu, made himself master of Hamdallahi and had the king of the Massina's head cut off (1862).

Always thirsty for new conquests, he went to pillage Timbuktu, came back to the Massina where his cruelty to the Fulani excited a revolt, was blocked in Hamdallahi, succeeded in getting away under cover of a fire lighted by himself, and finished by miserably perishing in a grotto where he had been cornered by the Fulani in September, 1864.

An empire founded under such conditions, and not even having as a base the homeland of its founder, could not last. El-Hadj had left, in each one of the kingdoms conquered by him, one of his sons or relatives as governor; all were jealous of one another or did not agree except in the jealousy of one of them, Ahmadu, who was installed at Segou and who claimed the supreme authority. The peoples oppressed by El-Hadj, his sons and his bands, seized all occasions to revolt against the detested yoke; pagans and Mussulmans united against the cruel despotism of Ahmadu and his brothers. Thus the

French troops, sent to put order into this chaos, were welcomed as liberators. Lieutenant-colonel Archinard entered Segu, April 6, 1890; becoming colonel, he occupied Niore on January 1, 1891, and, promoted to general, he captured the city of Bandiagara, April 29, 1893, which the Tukulors had made their capital in the Massina.

*The Wanderings of Samori*

French peace had succeeded Tukulor adventure. Only one serious obstacle menaced it, from the direction of the South, in the person of the Mandingo conqueror Samori Touré, a native of Wassulu, who, gaining the East in the measure that the French disturbed his position in the West, devastated Kong, the Gimini and the region of Bonduku (Ivory Coast) in 1894-95, attacking the British troops of the Gold Coast in 1897, then retreating toward the North-East of Liberia where, after a struggle of nearly eighteen years, he was at last made prisoner, September 29, 1898, by Captain Gouraud, now general, and Captain Gaden, now <sup>1</sup> governor of the colonies.

*The Peoples of the West Coast*

Till now, I have spoken only of the peoples constituting the great States: the Sarakolle, the Mandingo, the Songhoy, the Mossi, the Bambara, the Gurmanche, the Berba, the Fulani, the Tukulors. There were, however, many others in West Africa which, though not having had such brilliant fortunes, in nowise deserve to be passed over in silence.

<sup>1</sup> [1922.]

If we follow the coastal zone after the mouth of the Senegal, we first meet the Wolofs, divided into three kingdoms, of small extent, in truth, the Walo with its prince bearing the title of *brac*, the Jolof with its *bur*, the Cayor with its *damel*, who were at all times remarkable for their organization, the second of which, especially, played an important rôle on several occasions. Further to the South are the Baol, formed of Wolof and Serer groups obeying a king who bears the title of *tegne*. Beyond was the great Serer kingdom of Sine, where agriculture had always been flourishing.

Then we arrive at a scattering of tribes, for the most part very backward and often half savage, the probable remains of populations formerly more numerous and more compact, among whom the Mandingo and the Fulani had filtered in during centuries, sometimes driving them to the shores of the ocean and sometimes even to the islands situated in the estuaries of the rivers, as in the case of the Diola of the lower Gambia and of the Casamance, the Balant, Banyoun, Bissago, Papel, Biafada, etc., of Portuguese Guinea, the Nalu, Landuman, and Baga of lower French Guinea, the Timne and Bulom of Sierra Leone, sometimes isolating them in more or less extensive islets in the interior of the land, like those formed by the Tiapi, the Bassari and the Koniagui to the North of the Futa-Jallon, the Kisi, makers of stone statuettes, to the North-West of Liberia, and the Golo in the West of this latter country. Of the history of these divers tribes we know very little aside from the fact that their more

powerful neighbors have drawn from them thousands upon thousands of slaves who, sold to the slave-traders, crossed the Atlantic to clear and cultivate the grounds of the former Spanish, Portuguese, French, and English colonies of America.

From French Guinea onwards, peoples related to the Mandingo contributed with them to push the above tribes toward the sea in the process of attaining it themselves: such were the Susu or Soso, who formerly inhabited the Futa-Jallon, and who were driven back on the Atlantic side; such again were the Mande of Sierra-Leone, half Islamized to-day like the Susu and gifted like them with an enterprising spirit; such also were the Vei or Vai of the region of Gallina and of Cape-Mount (Sierra-Leone and Liberia), who write their language with a syllabic alphabet made out of whole cloth by a few of them toward the end of the eighteenth century or the beginning of the nineteenth.

I have mentioned the name of the Futa-Jallon and I cannot pass on without saying at least a word about this country of mountains and valleys, where a mingling of Susu, who claim to be autochthonous, of Fulani coming from the Massina and the Termes, of Sarakolle from Diakha (Massina), of Tukulors from the Futa-Toro and Mandingo from the upper Senegal succeeded in forming a sort of nation, called the Fula, relatively homogeneous, principally pastoral but also agricultural, speaking the Fulani language and, in the immense majority of cases, practicing the Mussulman religion, who built up a theocratic State analogous to that of the Torodo of the

Futa-Toro and among whom the taste for study and belles-lettres has been in favor up to our day.

I have also mentioned Liberia. Its origin and composition are known. Negro slaves liberated by philanthropic societies were brought there from North America after 1822 and there they multiplied. In 1847 they constituted themselves an independent republic whose constitution was copied from that of the United States and recognized by all the powers of Europe and America. The Liberians, properly speaking, that is the Negroes and mulattoes of American provenance, living in European style, having English for their mother tongue, number hardly more than 15,000 and exercise only a very limited control over some 700,000 natives who have been accorded to them as subjects by treaties concluded with France and Great Britain.

To the South-East of the Futa-Jallon, on the border of the dense forest, we meet with a series of peoples who are in general very primitive, sometimes even cannibalistic, who have specialized in the cultivation of kola-trees, selling the fruit to their neighbors of the North, the Malinke and the Jula. These are, in going from the country of the Kisi to Bonduku, the Toma, the Guerze or Pessy, the Manon, the Dan or Mbe, the Tura, the Lo or Guro, the Muin or Mona, the Ngan, the Gbin.

To the South of this series of tribes, confined in the dense forest, is a people perhaps still more primitive, except for the portion living at the border of the sea. They are in large part given to cannibalism and are still divided into a multitude of

tribes which extend from the Saint-Paul river to beyond the Sassandra. Those who inhabit the coast, known under the generic name of Krumen, given them by the English, have been used during almost five centuries by the navigators and merchants of all nations to furnish workmen for ships and rowing crews for trading stations.

To the East of the Krumen, the equatorial forest and its borders are inhabited principally, from Bandama to the Volta, by a group of populations remarkably developed intellectually, although of a material civilization which is sometimes very rudimentary and often debased because of the immoderate use of strong liquor. They surprise all who approach them by a meticulous bodily cleanliness and a worldly and complicated etiquette. Certain groups have attained a relatively advanced political level, while others live in the most absolute anarchy. The portions Christianized by Protestant missionaries from the British Gold Coast furnish an astonishing number of doctors of theology, barristers, lawyers and writers. This group contains notably: the Baule; the Agni; the Zema or Apollonians, clever merchants; the Abron, who in the fifteenth century founded a well organized State in the region of Bonduku, which still exists; the Ashanti, or better the Assanti, who had created a powerful and very well constituted kingdom, with Coomassie as its capital, which lasted from 1700 to 1895; and finally the Fanti, among whom the English have found a fruitful source of excellent functionaries and sub-

altern employees, as also among their Eastern neighbors the Gan of Accra.

In continuing toward the East, we again find peoples astonishingly gifted from the intellectual, artistic and political point of view. These are the Ewe of the lower Togo, the Mina and the Fon or Jeji of lower Dahomey, then in an ethnic group who are different although rather near neighbors, the Yoruba or Nago, the Benin or Edo and the Nupe of Southern Nigeria. Every one in France knows about the kingdom of Dahomey, which, founded before the sixteenth century,<sup>1</sup> with Abomey as its capital, was annexed by the French in 1894 at the end of a famous campaign; the kings of Dahomey were great warriors and slave-traders and became celebrated for their human sacrifices, but on the other hand it must be said that they had known how to organize their State and their army and administer their kingdom in a fashion which did them honor; it must also be added that the talents of the Dahomeans as farmers and artisans, joined to their unde-

<sup>1</sup> Certain authors give 1625 as the date of the foundation of Dahomey. Others as M. A. Le Hérissé, would not place this event farther back than the reign of the prince Wagbaja, between 1650 and 1680, under whom should have appeared, according to them, for the first time the name of Dahomey or better *Danhomé*. Now, the map of Joannes Janssonius, published at Amsterdam in 1627, entitled Guinea, shows the country and the city of Dauma to the North of the Arder (Ardra) and to the East of the Volta, that is to say, there where the Dahomey that we know is situated; moreover, Leo the African, who lived between 1491 and 1540 and who traveled in the Sudan toward 1507, also mentioned the kingdom of *Dauma*, which, to be sure, he situated much to the East of Dohomey, but which might very probably be the same as the *Dauma* of Joannes Janssonius.



niable intellectual capacities, place them among the first ranks of the Negro peoples of Africa.

Unlike all the peoples beyond the mouth of the Senegal, whom I have just enumerated, with the exception of the Wolofs, the Susu, the Vai and the inhabitants of the Futa-Jallon, also unlike the West African peoples who remain to be cited, the Yoruba are in great part Islamized. They are divided into several States provided with legislative assemblies and sometimes with journals—official and private—edited in English. The capital of one of these States is Abeokuta, an extremely populous and very industrious city.

As for Benin, it has formed, without doubt, since the fifteenth century and perhaps since a more remote epoch, a powerful and redoubtable State, where the industrial arts and notably the art of bronze working and that of ivory have flourished in a remarkable fashion; certain bronzes of Benin of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, that may be seen to-day in the museums of Holland, Germany and England and in private collections, are worthy rivals of analogous products of several renowned civilizations.

### *The Peoples of the Bend of the Niger*

The necessity of following the coasts of the ocean has constrained us to leave provisionally at one side a number of other interesting peoples scattered in the interior of the bend of the Niger: the Tombo or Habe, who live to the north of the Yatenga, in habitations dug out of the rocky cliffs of Bandiagara and

Hombori; the Samo, their neighbors to the southwest; the Fulse, Nioniosse, Kipirsi, Nuruma, Sis-sala and others commonly included in the generic name of Gurunsi; the Dagari, Birifo or Birifor, Gbanian or Gonja, Dagomba, Nankana and other groups ethnically very closely related to the Mossi; the Bobo, the Lobi, Dian and other more or less barbarian peoples; the Kulango of the upper eastern Ivory Coast, the Sumba of upper Togo and of upper Dahomey, etc.

It may be said of all these peoples that, in their totality, they have remained very primitive; aside from a few exceptions, they have not known how to arrive at a somewhat elevated political level and most of the time they have not progressed beyond a family unity. Although neighbors to well organized and powerful States, like the Mossi empires and the kingdoms of the Gurma and the Bergo, inhabited by populations of the same ethnic group, in general they have not profited by this proximity; some of them were included as subjects or vassals within these States, others remained outside of them, seeming to have only one aim, to safeguard by force of savagery, their wild but sterile independence. By a singular contradiction, nearly all are marvelous farmers and the attachment to the land seems to be the only solid and fecund institution in their chaotic society.

It would be proper to treat separately the important population of the Senufo or Siena, distributed from the region of San and Kutiala on the right bank of the Bani as far as that of Bonduku and the

elbow of the Black Volta, where it attains the northern limit of the great forest. In part thinned out by the Jula who had settled among them and who, as at Sikasso and Kong, have often exercised a durable hegemony over the country, many Senufo groups have succeeded in constituting little States of restricted area but offering cohesion and vitality. The iron industry and that of pottery, as well as agriculture and the art of music have attained among certain Senufo a development which merits attention.

## CHAPTER IV

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<sup>1</sup> The works here mentioned are also to serve for the next two chapters.

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## CHAPTER V

### THE NEGROES OF THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN SUDAN

THE HAUSA COUNTRIES—THE EMPIRE OF BORNU—THE  
BAGIRMI—THE KINGDOM OF WADAI—THE DARFUR AND  
THE KORDOFAN—RABAH'S ADVENTURE—MAHDISM—THE  
POPULATIONS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF ABYSSINIA AND  
THOSE OF THE EASTERN POINT OF AFRICA

#### *The Hausa Countries*

If we have fewer documents on the ancient history of the central and eastern Sudan than on that of the western portion, it is principally because at first the Mussulmans and then the Europeans did not enter into relations with the Center and East of Negro Africa till long after having penetrated to the heart of the regions situated further to the West. The Islamization and exploration of the country extending to the East of the Niger are relatively very recent.

The numerous and very interesting people called the Hausa or Afno, whose habitat is located between the Songhoy and Bornu, were at all times divided into several little States which seem to have been tributary to each other by turns, without any one of them having had a veritable preëminence over the others. There were and still are: Gober or the Kingdom of Tessawa, celebrated since the sixteenth century for its cotton fabrics and its leather foot-

gear; the kingdom of Kano, whose capital was already populous at the time of Leo the African and well known for its imposing wall as well as for its commerce and industry; that of Katsena, renowned for its agricultural riches and its military power; that of Zegzeg or Zaria, whose commercial prosperity has always been boasted of, and of which it is claimed that formerly, thanks to the energy of a woman who was then its sovereign, it had extended its power over all the Hausa countries; and still others, notably the kingdoms of Zinder, of the Zangara, the Kantagara, the Bauchi, etc.

It seems that these divers States were united in the fifteenth century under the authority of the *kantas* or kings of the Kebbi, a country situated to the South-West of Sokoto and to the West of Gando, whose inhabitants are thought to be the descendants of a crossing of the Songhay and the Hausa. Toward the year 1500 reigned a *kanta* who passed for being master of Katsena, Kano, Zaria, the Guber and the Zangara and for having extended his power over the Aïr. The Sultan of Bornu, Ali, who had just established himself at Gassaro, to the West of the Chad, wanted to put an end to the rapid expansion of the Kebbi and attacked the *kanta* in his residence at Surami, but after an indecisive siege he was obliged to retire. The king of the Kebbi pursued him, overtook him at the East of Katsena and put his army to flight. As the latter was retracing his steps, he was attacked by revolting Katsena people, was struck by an arrow and died of his wounds.

In 1513, his successor made an alliance with the

*askia* Mohammed, who aided him in recapturing Katsena and, in 1515, Agades. Fearing to see his States pass under the suzerainty of Gao, the *kanta* broke the treaty of alliance. In 1517 he inflicted a complete defeat on the army that the *askia* had sent against him and reëstablished the real authority of the Kebbi over the Katsena and the whole of the Hausa countries. But toward the year 1600, the kings of Gober and Zanzfara united with the king of the Aïr against the *kanta* then living, vanquished him, destroyed his three principal towns (Gungu, Surami and Liki) and freed the Hausa from the yoke of the Kebbi.

The Islamization of the Hausa, or more exactly of a certain portion of them, goes back only to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Till then, Mussulmans were hardly to be met with except at Kano, and here they were not numerous. It is to the mystic zeal and the warlike fanaticism of a Tukulor marabout,<sup>1</sup> a native of the Futa-Toro, that this important region of Africa owes its invasion by Mohammedanism.

In 1801, the sheik Ousman, the Torodo, son of one named Mohammed called Fode or Fodio, that is to say "the savant,"<sup>2</sup> having learned that difficulties had arisen between the Fulani shepherds of the

<sup>1</sup> It is entirely incorrect to speak of the Fulani empire of Sokoto and the conquest of the central Sudan by the Fulani or Fulbe, as is currently done: these people only intervened as the immediate cause, but the conquest was made by a Tukulor and for the profit of the Tukulors.

<sup>2</sup> Whence his Hausa name Ousman-dan-Fodio, that is, "Ousman, son of Fodio."

Gober and their Hausa patrons, profited by this circumstance to preach a holy war against the inhabitants and their neighbors. Siding with the Fulani, who had the common bond of language with him and his people, he raised an army among the unemployed warriors of the Futa-Toro, the Massina, the Liptako and the Songhoy and started out on the conquest of the Hausa. He succeeded in his enterprise and founded an empire, with Sokoto as its capital and its suburb of Wurno as the princely residence, an empire which was not long in including all the Hausa kingdoms, a part of the Adamawa, the Nupe, the Kebbi and, in the bend of the Niger, the Liptako. He even invaded Bornu, but was driven away in 1810 by the Kanemi, who will be spoken of further on. The sheik Ousman died about 1815 following a paroxysm of mystic mania. His brother Abdullahi took command of the western provinces of the empire, with Gando as the capital; the Adamawa formed an almost independent State; as for the larger part of the provinces conquered by Ousman, they passed under the domination of his son Mohammed Bello (1815-1837).

The beginning of this prince's reign was devoted to a struggle without respite against the Zanzara, the Gober, the kingdom of Katsena and the Kebbi who refused obedience to the son, as they did to the brother of Ousman and whose inhabitants had abjured Islamism almost immediately after they had been forced to accept it. In fact, all the Hausa revolted against Tukulor domination and the Tuareg of the Aïr and of Damerghu made a pact with the



rebels. Soon the Kanemi gave his aid and furnished them contingents sent by the Wadai and the Bagirmi; then he himself departed on a war against Mohammed Bello. The latter dispatched two armies against his enemy, one commanded by Yakuba, king of the Bauchi, the other by Ya-Mussa, king of Zaria. The latter took flight with his contingents at the first contact with the master of Bornu, but Yakuba, after two hard combats, put the Kanemi to rout and saved the Sokoto empire.

Mohammed Bello, who was a mediocre enough warrior and had no fondness for fighting in person, was a distinguished man of letters. He composed a number of poems and prose works in Arabic, some religious, others historical, protected the learned, received with respect the English explorer Clapperton (1828) and was notable for a rigorous control of the acts of his magistrates who feared his investigations and his censure.

His brother and successor, Atiku (1837-1843), distinguished himself especially as a great enemy of the dance and of music and proscribed all amusements. Gober and the Kingdom of Katsena revolted anew under his reign against the excesses of the Tukulor princes who were installed as residents in the vassal provinces.

Ali, son of Mohammed Bello, reigned from 1843 to 1855, in the midst of continual revolts of his pretended subjects who, notably in the Gober and the Kebbi, persistently refused to adhere to Islamism. The five Tukulor sovereigns who came after him—Ahmadu (1855-1866), Aliun-Karani (1866-1867),

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Ahmadu II (1867-1872), Bubakar (1872-1877) and Meyassu (1877-1904)—were incapable of governing an empire so vast and so badly organized, which fell to pieces like a house of cards, in 1904, by the single fact of the occupation of Sokoto by the British troops of Sir Frederick Lugard.

*The Empire of Bornu*

To the East of the Hausa, on both sides of Lake Chad, lives a population whose domain to the West bears the name of Bornu and to the East that of Kanem. This population is related by its origin and language to another, dispersed across immense territories, for the most part desert, that of the Teda or Gorân; these two groups meet at the Kavar (oasis of Bilma), at the Tibesti or Tu or region of Bardai (whence the name of Tibbu or Tubu and of Bardoa given to the Teda of this region), at the Borku or Daza, in the Ennedi (where they take the name of Anna and are called Bedeyat by the Arabs), in the Kabga or Kapka, North of the Wadai (Gaoga of Leo the African), finally in the Zaghawa, situated to the North of the Darfur between the Ennedi and the Nile. These Teda were divided into a great number of tribes, some nomads, others sedentary, some Mussulman, others pagan, some frankly Negroes, others more or less mixed with white blood. The family of the first sovereign of the Kanem-Bornu of whom tradition preserves the memory probably belonged to this people. He was a prince who is given the name of Saefe or Sefu, from which the Mussulmans have not hesitated to make

*Seïfullahi* "the sabre of God," although fully recognizing that he was no Mussulman; neither did they hesitate to assimilate him to Seïf ben Dzu-Yezen, the last Himyarite king of the Yemen.

In reality, this Saeфе was most certainly a Negro of Teda origin, who established his residence at Njimi, between Mao and Yagubri in the Kanem, and set his domination over the Teda of the Borku, the Tibesti and the Kawar, over the Kanembu or the inhabitants of the Kanem and over the Kanuri or Baribari of Bornu and Munio. We do not know at what epoch he lived. It is toward the eleventh century, under one of his successors named Oume, that Islamism is thought to have made its first appearance in the country.

At the end of the twelfth century the Teda and pagan dynasty founded by Saeфе was overthrown by a Kanembu and Mussulman dynasty whose first representative was Tsilim or Salmama, that is to say, "the Mussulman," who reigned, it is believed, from 1194 to 1220, taking the title of *mai*. His successor Dunama I (1220-1259) was obliged to combat Teda revolts. Then two centuries passed in almost continual anarchy. Under the *mai* Ibrahim (1288-1304) began the revolt of the vassal tribe of Bulala, which continued to trouble the empire for more than three hundred years. The *mai* Idris I (1352-1376) had just mounted the throne when the Arab traveler Ibn-Batuta, coming from Timbuktu to the Tuat, sojourned in 1353 at Takedda, between Gao and Agades (Teguidda of our present maps), at that time celebrated for its copper mines in full opera-

tion; the Takedda people told Ibn-Batuta that King Idris never showed himself in public and never spoke to any one except hidden behind a curtain, according to a custom that may still be observed in our day in many States of Negro Africa.

The *mai* Omar (1394-1398) decided to abandon the Kanem to the Bulala and went to settle in Bornu, where one of his successors, Ali (1472-1504), had established the capital of the empire of Gassaro or Kasr-Eggomo, 75 kilometers to the West of the Chad. It was this Ali who attacked the *kanta* of the Kebbi and was defeated by him. His son Idris II (1504-1526) reconquered the Kanem from the Bulala; he was a contemporary of Leo the African, who speaks of him in his accounts, giving him by mistake the name of *Abran* (Ibrahim), one of the predecessors of Idris.

It is with Idris III (1571-1603) that the empire of the Bornu attained its apogee. Its suzerainty then extended over Kano, Zinder and the Aïr, over the Kanem as far as the Fitri, over all the countries inhabited by the Teda and, to the South of the Chad, over the Mandara or Wandala (Marua), over the Kotoko (Kusseri) and over the Mosgu (middle Logone). But after the death of this prince, the Bulala again became masters of the Kanem, only to be chased off later by the Tunjur emigrants from the Wadai and to withdraw toward the East. It was the Tunjur who reigned from now on at Kanem, with Mao as their capital, but they paid tribute to the *mai* of Bornu, who kept an official at Mao.

These Tunjur, who ordinarily spoke an Arabic

dialect, passed for being of an ante-Islamic Arab origin. What is certain, however, is that they have professed Islamism for scarcely a century and that many of them have never been and are not yet Mussulmans. It may be that they were of Abyssinian origin and that their ancient paganism had been a more or less corrupt Christianity. It seems, moreover, that this appellation of Tunjur was applied at the East of the Chad to all the non-Mussulman people to whom tradition attributes a Negro origin.

In 1808, Bornu was attacked by the Tukulor conqueror Ousman-dan-Fodio, who defeated the troops of the *mai* Ahmed near Gassaro. A very influential chief, Mohammed-el-Amine, called "the Kanemi," because of the country of his origin (the Kanem), placing himself at the head of the Negroes of Bornu and of Shoa Arabs,<sup>1</sup> pushed back the Tukulor army into the Hausa country and brought back to his capital the *mai* Ahmed, who had taken flight at the approach of the enemy (1810). This Ahmed and his successors played the rôle of puppet kings and the authority from now on was entirely in the hands of the Kanemi and the members of his family. The sheik Omar, son of the Kanemi, took the reins of government at the death of his father and finished in 1846 by proclaiming himself Sultan of Bornu. He installed his residence at Kukawa or Kuka, which became the capital of the third dynasty, founded by his father and himself.

<sup>1</sup> There are a certain number of Arabs scattered to the East of the Chad. Some of them, sedentary, coming from Arabia by way of Abyssinia, are called *Shoa*. Others, nomads, coming from Tripolitania, are known by the name of Oulad-Sliman.

Hachem, successor of Omar, was attacked in 1893 by the adventurer Rabah; in spite of the help sent him by the Wadai, he was defeated and killed. Rabah destroyed Kuka and transferred the capital to Dikoa, to the South of the Chad. Shortly afterwards he was vanquished and killed at Kusseri by the French detachments of Major Lamy, April 22, 1900, and Abubekr Guerbei, nephew of Hachem, was recognized by the English as Sultan of Bornu, which became a British protectorate.

*The Bagirmi*

To the South of the Kanem extends the kingdom of the Bagirmi, whose foundation is attributed to a hunter, sometimes called Bernim-Besse and sometimes Dokkengue, who is supposed to have built Massenya, the capital, toward 1513. He was a pagan, as were his successors up to Malo (1548-1561), who took the title of *mbang* and created the great offices of the kingdom. It is Abdallah (1561-1602), son of Malo, who is thought to have brought Islamism to the Bagirmi. His ninth successor, Borkumanda-Tadele (1734-1739), was a great warrior: after having directed an expedition toward the Borku and the Kavar, he twice vanquished the king of the Wadai, Mohammed Ez-Zaouni. But Alawine (1739-1741) was in turn vanquished by the emperor of Bornu, to whom the Bagirmi became vassals. Mohammed Alamine (1741-1784) seized the Fitri from the Kuka and shook off the tutelage of Bornu. Abderrahman-Gaurang I (1784-1806) recommenced the struggle against the Wadai; he was

defeated and killed by Saboun, king of the latter country, who imposed the suzerainty of the Wadai on the Bagirmi and placed a son of Abderrahman-Gaurang there as nominal sovereign. Another of his sons, Tchigama, deposed his brother, was arrested by order of Saboun, was brought as prisoner to Wara, capital of the Wadai, then released, and finally came back to Massenya, where he reigned under the name of Ousman Borkumanda from 1807 to 1846, paying regularly enough the tribute exacted by the Wadai. He conducted several expeditions against Bornu but was defeated by the Kanemi in 1824 at Lederi, near the Chad, thanks to two cannons which the English major, Denham, had given to the chief of Bornu. Abdelkader (1846-1858), in spite of a victory over Mohammed-Cherif, king of the Wadai, remained tributary to this State. Abu-Sekine (1858-1884) wished equally to throw off the tutelage of the Wadai; in 1871, vanquished and driven from Massenya by Ali, king of the Wadai, he retook his capital after the death of this prince, in 1875. The cruelty of his son Borkumanda (1884-1885) roused his subjects to drive him from the country and he was replaced by Abderrahman-Gaurang II who, attacked by Rabah in 1893 and menaced anew by this conqueror in 1896, accepted French protectorship in 1897.

### *The Kingdom of Wadai*

If the history of the Bigirmi sums up in a perpetual oscillation between the yoke of Bornu and that of Wadai, the history of this latter State

is made up of hardly more than the cruelties and debaucheries of the majority of its kings. The country known under the names of Wadai, Bergu and Dar-Selah is peopled by some tribes of more or less pure Arab origin and a great number of Negro tribes, the principal one of which is that of the Maba, the others being the Tama, Massalit, Mimi, Kuka, Bulala, Rougna, etc. The Teda are also met there.

The Wadai was at first governed by pagans to whom is attributed a Semitic origin, the Tunjur, who had their capital at Kadama, to the South-West of Abecher. It is only toward 1615 that Islamism was adopted by a portion of the population, under the influence of one named Jameh or Saleh, whom some say was a native of the country while others relate him to the Arab tribe of the Jaaline, whose original home is at Berber on the Nile, downstream from Khartoum. As for the Tunjur they had remained pagans. A son or descendant of this Jameh, named Abdelkerim, raised an army of Arabs and of recently Islamized Negroes, defied and killed the Tunjur prince, proclaimed himself Sultan of the Wadai and established himself to the North of Abecher, at Wara, where he reigned from 1635 to 1655, converting a part of the inhabitants, by force, to Islamism. Like the Tunjur princes whose place he had taken, he paid tribute to the Darfur.

His son Kharut (1655-1678) pursued the Islamization of the Wadai. Kharif (1678-1681) and Yakub-Arous (1681-1707) tried at several times to shake off the tutelage of the Darfur; the later finally suc-



ceeded in defeating and capturing Omar-Lele, king of the Darfur. After an unfortunate struggle against the Bagirmi conducted by Mohammed Ez-Zaouni, the war between the Wadai and the Darfur recommenced with Joda (1745-1795), under whose reign the first of these States extended its influence over a part of the Kanem.

Saboun (1803-1813), after having seized the throne from his own father Saleh-Derret or Dered, distinguished himself by victorious expeditions against the Bagirmi and against his revolting vassals of the Tama. He was a cruel and sanguinary prince, who was assassinated by an unknown hand. His son Yussef, called Kharifine, was perhaps even more barbarous. Toward 1829, after a feminine regence which was marked by the worst atrocities, Abdelaziz, grandson of Saboun, seized the power; he had to struggle against continuous rebellions which he drowned in blood.

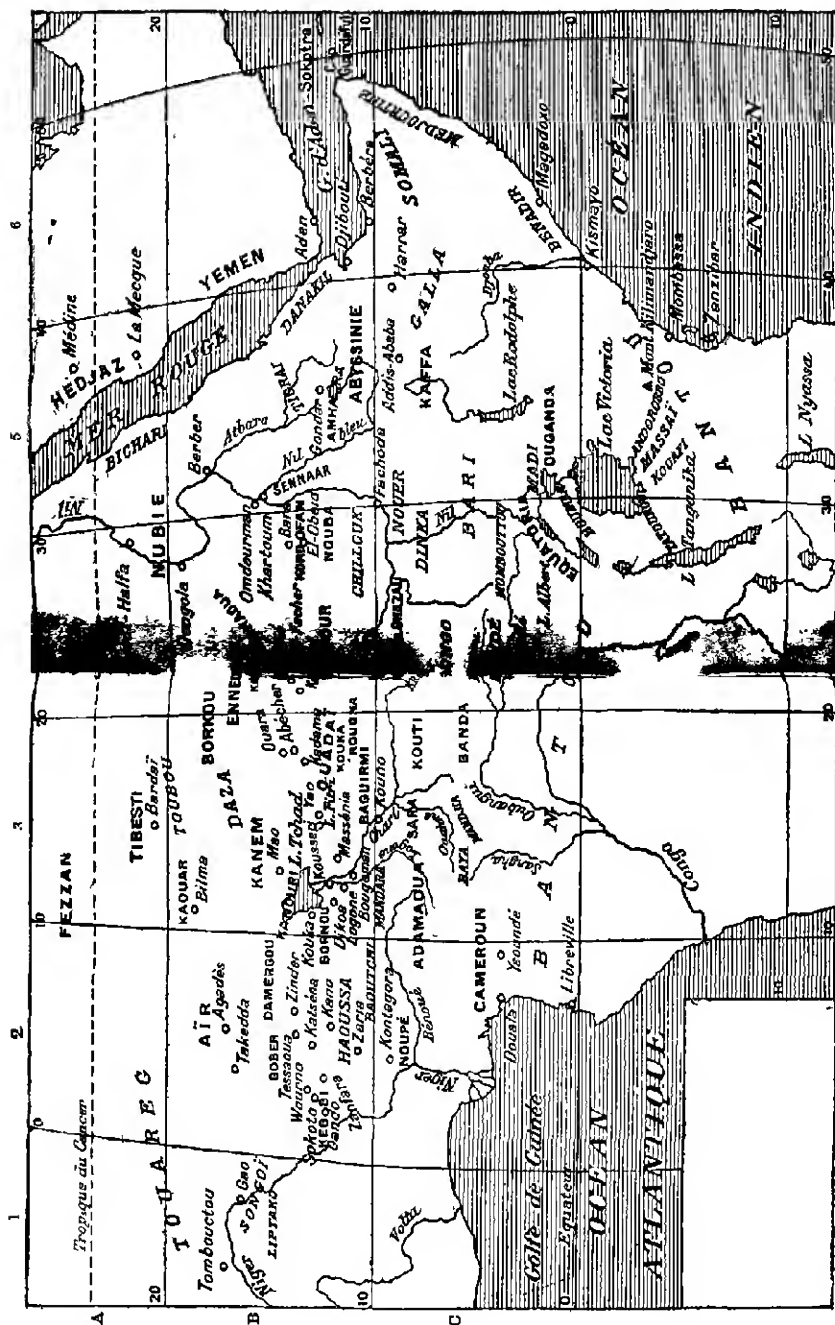
At his death (about 1835), an army of the Darfur invaded the Wadai, following depredations made in the western provinces of the first of these kingdoms by the Wadaians whom famine had pushed to pillage. The troops sent by Mohammed-Fadel, king of the Darfur, entered Wara and placed on the throne of the Wadai one named Mohammed-Cherif who engaged himself to accept the suzerainty of the Darfur. This Mohammed-Cherif (1835-1858) appears to have been the only sovereign of the Wadai who showed restraint in the matter of capital punishment. He enjoyed a real prestige and considerable power. He did not fear to attack the powerful

sheik Omar, Sultan of Bornu, whom he defeated at Kusseri and from whom he obtained a war contribution of 8,000 thalers. It is he who transferred the capital from Wara to Abecher. Becoming blind, obliged to defend himself against the revolting Tama and one of his own sons, he ended by dying half insane in 1858.

One named Ali succeeded him and was especially active in encouraging commerce with the Mediterranean and bringing back order to the country. He received a visit from Nachtigal in 1873-1874, at the moment of his struggle against Abu-Sekine, *mbang* of the Birgirmi. It was he who had the royal palace of Abecher constructed by two Tripolitarians and who annexed the Rougna and the Kuti.

King Yussef (1874-1898) allowed the Bagirmi to regain their independence. It was under his reign that Rabah, coming from Bahr-el-Ghazel invaded the Kuti (1879), then the Rougna, raided the southern dependencies of the Wadai and installed one named Senussi (1890) as sultan of the Kuti and the Rougna. The latter, once Rabah was at Bornu (1894) accepted the suzerainty of the Wadai, then, a little later, that of France.

Ibrahim (1898-1901) perished as the result of wounds inflicted by rebels. Abu-Ghazali (1901-1902) had to struggle against one of his officers, Acil, who drove the king from Abecher and then took refuge himself in the Fitri, where he placed himself under the protection of the French troops. Dudmurra replaced Abu-Ghazali. In 1909, the French took Abecher and placed Acil on the throne of the Wadai;



Dudmurra took refuge in the North of the country, continued the struggle during two years and at last made his submission to France in 1911. As for Acil, France was constrained to depose him in 1912; he has not had a successor.

*The Darfur and the Kordofan*

Like the Wadai, the Darfur,<sup>1</sup> its neighbor to the East, was formerly under the authority of the idolatrous Tunjur. In the sixteenth century, the power was usurped by a Mussulman, Soloun-Sliman, who was, it is said, of Arab origin on his mother's side and who established his capital at Bir-Nabak. Omar-Lele, his fourth successor, moved it to Kab-kabie; it is this Omar-Lele who was vanquished and made prisoner by the king of the Wadai, Yakub-Arous, toward 1700. After him reigned Abubekr, Abderrahmin I, then Teherab, who conquered and Islamized the Kordofan, then Abderrahman II, who transferred the royal residence to Tendelty, called by the Arabs El-Facher, and who was in relations with Bonaparte during his campaign in Egypt (1798-1799).

Under the reign of Mohammed-Fadel (1800-1840), the Kordofan escaped from the Darfur only to be conquered and occupied by the Egyptians. Then Hossein reigned. Under his successor Haroun, the Darfur, in its turn, was annexed to the Egyptian Sudan by Zobeir-Pasha (1874); Haroun having re-

<sup>1</sup> I employ the word Darfur to conform to accepted tradition; in reality, the name of the country and its inhabitants is *Fur* or *For* and the expression *dar-Fur*, employed by the Arabs, signifies "habitat of the Fur."

volted, was vanquished and killed at Kulkul by Slatin-Pasha, who was named governor of the Darfur (1879).

The Kordofan or Kordofal separates the Darfur from the Sennar, from which it is itself separated by the Nile. The inhabitants of the Kordofan are Negroes speaking several distinct languages, of which certain ones are similar in system to the Bantu dialects. Those of the North are called Koldaji or Kulfan, those of the South Nuba or Dyur. The word Nuba, from which we have made "Nubia" and "Nubians," is properly the name of the mountainous country which constitutes the southern province of the Kordofan as well as of the natives of this province, one part of whom has been converted to Islamism for a fairly long time; by extension, *Nuba* has become the surname given by the Arabs to all the Mussulman Negroes of the eastern Sudan, while the pagan Negroes of the same region are called, whatever their ethnic origin, Fertit in the Darfur, Jenakhera in the Wadai and Kirdi in the Kanem. On the other hand, in Europe the name "Nubia" has been given to the region situated along the Nile between Wady Halfa and Khartoum (region of Dongola), because a certain number of Nuba have settled there. But the real "Nubia" is located in the South of the Kordofan and it is not useless to recall the fact here.

Governed at first by the pagan Tunjur like the Wadai and the Darfur, the Kordofan was then conquered by the Mussulman Nuba whose chief was called Mussabba. We have just seen that it was

annexed to the Darfur under the reign of Teherab, who succeeded in propagating Islamism among the Koldaji, establishing a *magdum* or governor at Bara, and that it was taken away from the latter country under Mohammed-Fadel by the Egyptian *defterdar* Mohammed-Bey, who made El-Obeid the capital of his government.

#### *Rabah's Adventure*

It is hardly possible in a historical picture of the eastern Sudan to pass over in silence the adventure of Rabah and the Mahdist movement at the end of the last century,

Zobier-Pasha, who belonged to the Arab tribe of the Jaaline, had been named governor of the Bahr-el-Ghazal about 1875. Called to Cairo to confer with the Egyptian authorities, he confided his charge to his son Suleiman. The latter, betrayed to Gordon-Pasha by the Dongola people, enemies of the Jaaline, believing in the hostility of the governor-general of the Sudan, took sides against the Egyptian government and favored the revolt of Haroun, the de-throned Sultan of the Darfur. Gessi-Pasha was sent against him, inflicting a bloody defeat.

His principal lieutenant at the time was Rabah, son of a Negro woman, the wet-nurse of Zobier-Pasha, and in consequence he was foster-brother of the latter. At the overthrow of Suleiman, Rabah fled with the remnants of his master's army and began his conquests to the North-West of the Bahr-el-Ghazal (1878). Pushing toward the West he penetrated the Banda in 1879, attacked the Kuti in 1883,

installing Senussi there as Sultan in 1890. In 1892 he attacked the Bagirmi and in 1893 seized Bougoman, which at that time replaced Massenya as the capital. The same year he attacked Hashem, sultan of Burnu, vanquished and put him to death (December, 1893). Then he marched on the Gober, where Abubekr, nephew and successor of Hashem, had taken refuge; stopped by the army of the emperor of Sokoto, he turned against the little States to the South of the Chad, took Gulfei from the Busso, Kuseri from the Mandara, Logone from the Kotoko, again invaded the Bagirmi in 1898, set fire to Massenya, pursued the *mbang* near to Kuno, there, with 8,000 men, clashed with some thirty militiamen commanded by the administrator Bretonnet (July 18, 1899) and did not finish with this handful of brave men till after eight hours of combat. April 22, 1900, he was beaten at Kuseri by Major Lamy and killed at the end of the battle, which also cost the life of his conqueror. His extraordinary adventure lasted twenty-two years and ruined one part of the Sudan.

#### *Mahdism*

Like Rabah, the *mahdi* and his khalife were Sudanese. Mohammed-Ahmed, a native of Dongola, belonged to a Nuba family. He proclaimed himself *mahdi* in 1881, after having defeated Rachid-Bey, governor of Fashoda, in the mountains of the southern Kordofan, where his family had come and where he had established his residence. In 1882, he won a new victory over an important Egyptian column, then seized all the Kordofan, whose capital,

El-Obeid, fell to his power in February, 1883. He drove into ambush the army of Hicks-Pasha, 10,000 men strong, which was entirely massacred at Chekan (Kordofan), November 4, 1883. Slatin-Pasha, governor of the Darfur, and Lupton-Bey, governor of Bahr-el-Ghazal, capitulated in 1884. Alone, Emin-Pasha in Equatoria (Upper Nile) and Mustafa-Bey at Dongola continued to hold out; Berber and the Sennar were in the hands of the "Dervishes," as the partisans of the *mahdi* were called. On January 15, 1885, the latter seized Omdurman, a suburb of Khartoum, and January 26, he entered the citadel of Khartoum as conqueror and put to death Gordon-Pasha. From now on he was the actual master of four-fifths of what, five years before, had been the Egyptian Sudan. Shortly afterward he died of typhoid fever at Omdurman.

As for Abdullah, he belonged to a Baggara tribe (cow-herders) of the Darfur, who were a cross between Arabs and Negroes. He was bound by friendship to the *mahdi*, whose principal advisor he became and who at the moment of dying designated him as his "khalife," that is to say, his representative and successor (1885). Abdullah immediately set aside the relatives and compatriots of the *mahdi*, Nuba of Dongola and the Kordofan, and surrounded himself with Darfur people, several thousands of whom he brought to Omdurman. He organized a powerful army, which he sent against Abyssinia; the city of Gondar was taken and pillaged by the bands of the khalife and the *negus* John was killed (1888). In 1892, the troops of Abdullah established themselves



in Equatoria, which Emin-Pasha had abandoned in 1889. Shortly afterward, however, the ephemeral power of the "Dervishes" began to decline: in 1896, the Anglo-Egyptian troops reoccupied Dongola and, in 1897, Berber; on July 10, 1898, Captain Marchand, to-day General, seized Fashoda; the *sirdar* Kitchener took Omdurman the following September 2, and in 1899, Abdullah, in refuge in the Kordofan, was defeated and killed by Colonel Wingate.

*Populations in the Neighborhood of Abyssinia and  
Those of the Eastern Point of Africa*

We have just seen in what fashion, rather disastrous in general, Mussulman influence was exercised over the countries between the Chad and the Nile. On the other side of the great African river, it was another influence that predominated the greater part of the time, that of Christian Abyssinia.

This influence was, without contradiction, considerable on the Negro and Negroid populations comprised within the limits of the Abyssinian empire or neighboring these limits. If one thinks of the part that this empire has played in the destinies of ancient Egypt; if it is remembered that at the birth of Mohammed (570) it exercised the suzerainty on the other side of the Red Sea, over the Yemen, and that it sent an army of almost 40,000 men against Mecca; if one considers the extraordinary renown that the power of the famous "Prete-John"<sup>1</sup> enjoyed in

<sup>1</sup> And not Priest-John [in French *Prêtre-Jean*] as has been incorrectly written. This appellation came from the Latin translation of the title of *belut* "precious," that was borne by a *negus* by the name of John. On a map of Abyssinia dating from 1627 mention is

Europe during the Middle Ages; if one reflects that this Christian State was able to preserve its religion across the centuries, in the proximity to the great centers of Islamism, and to defend it against Mussulman enterprises from the epoch of the conquest of Egypt by the first khalifes to the violent onrush of the "Dervishes" of Omdurman, one is obliged to suppose that a like force could not have spread among the peoples with whom it came in contact.

At all times the Abyssinian empire has included, intermingled with each other, populations of diverse and extremely mixed origins. Those who hold the power are considered to be Semitic and speak, at any rate, Semitic languages, especially the Tigrai, the Guraghé and the Amhara or Amharics, to whom belong the imperial family, who claim to be descended from Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Others, related in general to the Cushite branch of the race called Hamitic, speak languages which have certain points of contact with those of the Negroes; such are the Agau, the Bogos or Bilén, the Saho, the Kwara, the Kaffa and a number of tribes included in the generic term of *Sidama*. Certain ones, like the Falasha, are considered to be of Israelitish origin, although using a language analogous to those of the preceding tribes.

As for the people neighboring Abyssinia properly speaking, to the North (Bishari or Beja), to the East (Danakil or Afar), to the South-East (Somali)

made of *Abissinorum sive Pretiose Ioannis Imperium* and the text imprinted on the reverse side says: "the princes are called by the Moors *Asiatabassi*, in Ethiopia *Ioannes Belut*, that is, high, or precious; commonly *Prete-Iean*."

and to the South (Galla or Oromo), they present the most varied types, among which the Negro often predominates, and they speak languages which seem to be related in part to the African Negro dialects. In fact all these populations are more or less Negroid in aspect and there is manifested among all, in various degrees, the influence of the Negro race; this appears especially preponderant among the tribes most distant from the Amharic plateau; it becomes almost complete among the Masai, who follow the Galla and the Somali in the southern direction. Numerous Asiatic invasions have also contributed to multiply the mixtures.

The Danakil and the Somali are at the present time for the most part Mussulmans; they are mostly nomadic, divided into a multitude of little tribes. The Galla, at the same time farmers and shepherds, are in majority pagans, but many of them are Christians; one finds among them communal collectivities<sup>1</sup> administered by a council of notables. They were already constituted at the time of the Pharaohs; very powerful in the tenth century of our era, according to Masudi, they undertook great migrations in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; after having been for a long time redoubtable adversaries of the *negus* of Abyssinia, they were engulfed in the empire of the latter in the eighteenth century.

To the south of the Mussulman States of the central Sudan and of the populations, more or less influenced by Abyssinia, of the eastern Sudan, live numerous peoples who are in general very backward,

<sup>1</sup> [A translation of the rather vague term "*collectivité*."]

some cannibals, among whom Islamism has not penetrated and who up to a recent epoch have served as a reservoir of slaves for the Mohammedan princes of the North. Such are the Gbari, the Munchi, Batta, Fali, Mbum, etc., in the southern Hausa country and the Adamawa; such are equally the Baya of the upper Sangha, the Manjia of the Wahm, the Banda of the upper Ubangui, the Azandeh or Niam-Niam who follow them to the East, all belonging to the same ethnic and linguistic group; such also are the Sara, the Kenga, the Gaberi, etc., at the South of the Bagirmi, the Bulala and the Kuka of the Fitri, the Bongo and the Krej of the upper Bahr-el-Ghazal and still other populations forming with these and with the Bagirmians another group; such also are the Rougna to the south of the Wadai, the Dinka to the South of the Darfur, the Nuer and the Shilluk to the South of the Kordofan; such finally, along the upper Nile, are the Bari, the Madi and the Mombuttu who live to the West and North of Lake Albert, and more to the East and to the South-East, the Wandorobo and their cousins the Kuafi, the Humba, the Taturu and the Masai.

All these peoples together constitute the most southern representatives of the groups called "Sudanese" and border on the most northern portion of the Bantu group. The line of demarcation which is very irregular, starts from the Atlantic in the region of Calabar, to the northwest of Duala, and at first follows approximately the 5° of North latitude as far as the Sangha, then the 3° to about Lake Rudolf, bending then in the direction of the South

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so that it attains the Indian Ocean toward the 5° of south latitude, between Mombasa and Zanzibar.

### CHAPTER V

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## CHAPTER VI

### SOUTH AFRICA

DIVISIONS OF THE BANTU AND COMPARATIVE UNIMPORTANCE OF THEIR STATES—THE CONGO—THE ANSIKA—THE MATAMAN—THE BECHUANA—THE MONOMOTAPA—KILWA AND THE ZANZIBAR SULTANATES—THE KINGDOMS OF THE INTERIOR—EUROPEAN AND CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE

#### *The Bantu*

To the South of the line described at the end of the preceding chapter, a line which runs in general a little to the North of the Equator but bending to the South at the point of reaching the Indian Ocean, extends the domain of the Negroes of the Bantu group. Except for the Negrillos disseminated in the Equatorial zone or grouped into more important masses in the southwest of the continent and the populations of European origin which have colonized the extreme South of the continent, these Negroes occupy the country to themselves.

The Bantu have been at all times, and are still to-day, divided into numberless groups having nothing in common except ethnic and linguistic ties. They have never constituted among themselves vast states comparable to those of the Sudanese zone, not that the Bantu are less gifted than the other Negroes from the social and political point of view or that the passion for lucre and the thirst for power, which engenders great conquerors and founders of empires,

was less developed among them than among the Sudanese, but simply because their country, covered in great part by thick forests and cut up by innumerable water courses whose annual overflow transforms them into serious obstacles to communication, is less favorable than the Sudanese steppes for great military excursions and for commercial and political relations of region with region and of people with people.

However, since the time that this part of Africa has been revealed to Europe by the first navigators, the existence of a certain number of kingdoms has been noted in this region which, although never having had the extent or the influence at long distance of the empire of Ghana or that of Manding, were not without possessing some power supported by a rudimentary organization.

### *The Congo*

Such was the case of the States which in the sixteenth century, and doubtless for a long time previously, were scattered along the shores of the Atlantic from the Fernando-Po to the Cape of Good Hope. Among the most renowned, the first was the kingdom of Loango or of the Brama, lying between Cape Lopez and the mouth of the Congo or Zaire river. Then came the one that the Europeans called "the empire" of the Congo, the foundation of which goes back to the fourteenth century. In the following century, its sovereign, the *mani-congo*, exercised his authority as far as Setti-Camma in the North and Benguella to the South and, to the East, as far as

the Kasai and the upper Zambezi; but its boundaries shrank, toward the beginning of the sixteenth century, to Cabinda in the North, Loanda in the South and to Kuango in the East. The capital of the State was in the interior of the country, at Banza, to-day San-Salvador.

*The Ansika*

To the East of the Loango and at the North-East of the Congo, astride the river, is the kingdom of the Ansika or Anikana, whose inhabitants were for the most part the Bateke and the Bayaka. The latter are to-day scattered principally to the West of the Bateke; formerly they probably occupied the region to the North and the East of Stanley Pool and probably gained their present habitat as the result of migrations of a warlike character; they were cannibalistic in the sixteenth century and very much feared by the populations along the coast.<sup>1</sup>

The king of the Ansika bore the title of *makoko* and resided not far from the place where Brazzaville now stands.

*The Mataman*

To the South of "the empire" of the Congo, along the Ocean, extends a State whose chief was called *mataman* and whose capital was near the present city of Mossamedes. Its territory, which stretched North

<sup>1</sup> The first travelers who heard the Bayaka speak called them Iaca or Jaga, which was the true name of this people when separated from the prefix of plurality *ba*. Certain authors have wished to relate these Jaga to the Masai and others to the Galla, having them accomplish across all Africa wanderings which seem to be purely imaginary.



as far as Benguella and South almost to the bay of Swakopmund, was peopled by Bachimba, Herero, Damara, and to the South, by Hottentots.

*The Bechuana*

All the countries which constitute to-day the Union of South Africa (Cape Colony, Natal, Orange Free State, Transvaal) formed a vast and also very homogeneous State, whose dominant population, the Bechuana, exercised a sort of suzerainty over the Basuto, the Zulu and other Bantu peoples closely related to the Bechuana, as well as over the Hottentots and Bushmen of Luderitzland and the Kalihari desert.<sup>1</sup>

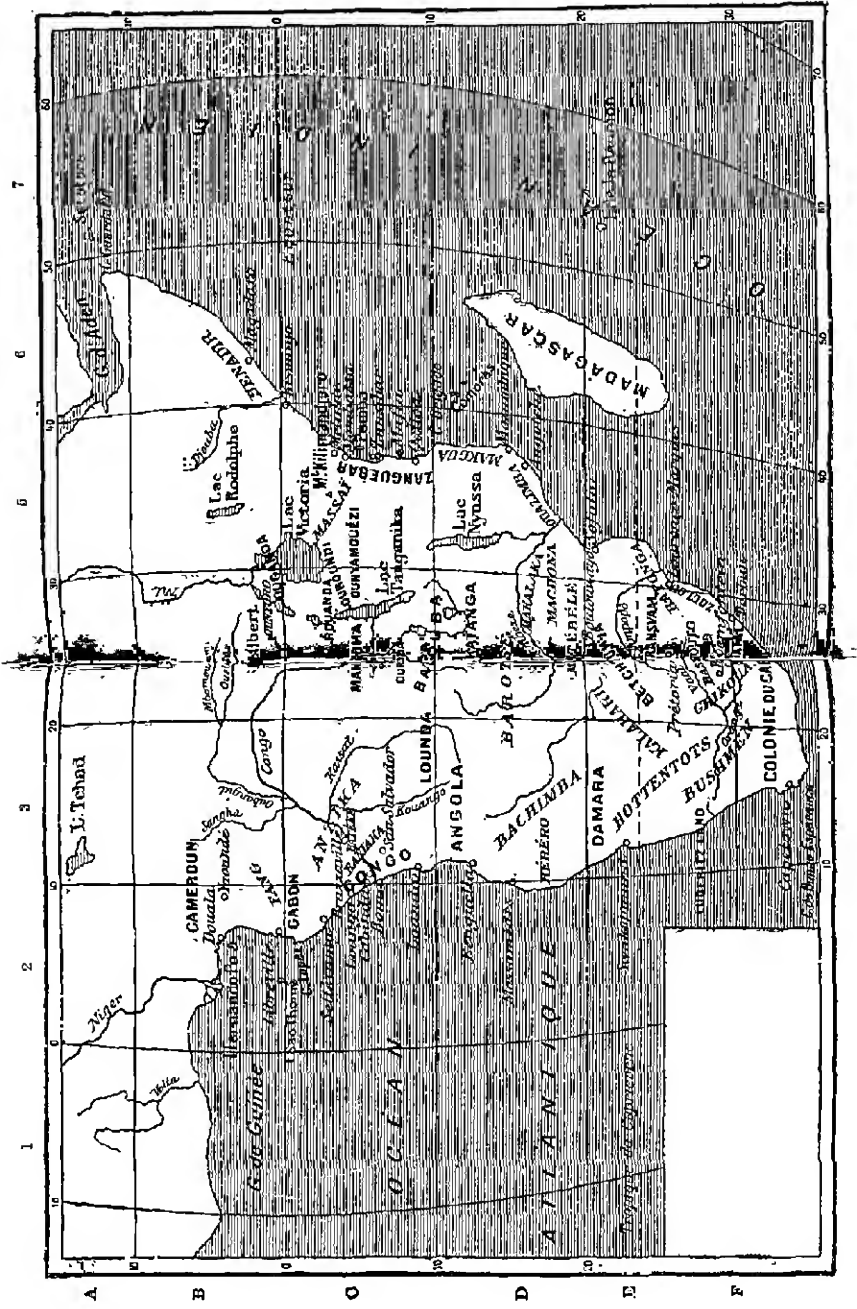
*The Monomotapa*

On the Eastern Coast, between the bay of Lourenço-Marques and that of Sofala, reigned the famous *monomotapa*, a title signifying, according to Avelot, "lord of the hippopotomi," whose State, founded before the tenth century, comprised as suzerain populations the Matebele and the Makalaka and as vassal populations the Matonga and the Mashona. The Wazimba, a cannibalistic and war-like people who lived to the West of Sofala made frequent incursions into this kingdom.

*Kilwa and the Zanzibar Sultanates*

All the rest of the Eastern Coast, up to Cape Guardafui, was more or less dependent upon the sul-

<sup>1</sup> [Exception to this view is taken in some recent English historical studies.]



tanates founded by Arabs of Maskat and Persians from Shiraz and Bushire, with the commercial concourse of Hindus from Bombay and Malabar.

The most powerful of these sultanates, which the others exalted at least nominally, had its seat of government at Kilwa between Cape Delgado and the island of Mafia. Founded toward 980 by Ali, son of Hassan, prince of Shiraz, it had as vassals the sultans of Sofala, Angoshe, Mozambique, Zanzibar, Pemba, Mombaz or Mombasa, Melinde or Malindi, Kismayu and Magadoxo (Benadir). In the course of time, the sultans of Sofala and of Zanzibar freed themselves from the tutelage of the Sultan of Kilwa and the sultan of Zanzibar became suzerain of the settlements situated to the north of his island.

These divers Arab and Persian sultans were not, properly speaking, governors of States; their authority was exercised only over Mussulman colonies of Asiatic origin established around their respective residences and over the natives living in the proximity of these residences. Their principal occupation was to recruit slaves whom the Negro chiefs, with whom they were in relations, procured by means of raids and sold to them and which they in turn sent off to the ports of the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf or else resold to the Portuguese slave-traders. Slave-trading constituted almost the only commerce and the only excuse for the Mussulman settlements of East Africa and was the source of their prosperity. It is not necessary to say that these affairs were purely material, that they were profitable only to the sultans, their followers and clients

and that such a situation, far from benefiting the mass of the native population, contributed to maintain it in a state of barbarism and moral misery from which it has not even yet completely succeeded in emancipating itself.

All the Negro tribes scattered along the Eastern Coast were known to the Portuguese under the name of *Makua* and to the Arabs under that of *Zendj*, these two words being nearly synonymous with slaves in the mouths of those who employ them. Of the second word was formed the compound *Zendj-bar* "country of slaves" from which we have made Zanguebar and Zanzibar.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Kingdoms of the Interior*

In the interior of the country, native States had been constituted which were at least as powerful as those along the coast. To the East of "the empire" of the Congo extended the kingdom of Lounda, astride the high valleys of the Kasai and the Zambezi, known under the name of the kingdom of the *muata-yamvo*. Between this State and that of the *monomotapa*, on the middle Zambezi, was the kingdom of the Barotse, to the North of which was that of the Katanga, in the mountainous region where the Congo river takes its source. Still further to the North, to the West of Lake Tanganyika, one meets the kingdom of the Urua or Baluba and that of the

<sup>1</sup> The Arabs preferred the name of *Zend* for the Negro populations with which they were in relation and from which they drew their slaves and that of *Kafir* (pagan) for those who lived outside of their zone of action. As for the denomination of *Makua*, it applies, properly speaking, to a tribe of Mozambique.

Manyema and, to the East of the Lake, the celebrated "empire" of the *muene-muezi* or the Wanyamwezi, with its vassals the Ourundi and the Ruanda. Finally, to the North of Lake Victoria, flourished the Uganda, with its vassal the Unyoro.

All these States, Negro kingdoms and Arab and Persian sultanates, have been preserved to our day or at least up to the time of the occupation of the country by European powers. Within their boundaries or near by and often at their expense, migrations of tribes took place, none of which seems to have had the importance that some have wished to attribute to certain of them. Some peoples, almost unknown to the ancient navigators, have later been revealed to our attention, as, for instance, the Fang or Pahuins who are met with in the Cameroons and the Gabon. But in a general fashion, the political and social state of Negro South Africa appears to have undergone very little change from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century. At any rate, none of the States mentioned above has exercised a serious influence on the development of civilization and, even momentarily, has not thrown an appreciable luster within its own borders.

#### *European and Christian Influence*

On the other hand, the influence of European usages imported by the Portuguese, Dutch, English, German, Belgian and French colonists and that of the Christian religion preached by Catholic and Protestant missionaries have had more weight on these populations, incompletely formed and remaining

foreign to Islamic enterprise, than they had to the North of the Bantu country. Thanks to the great number of Europeans living permanently in South Africa and to the increasing penetration of the Boers and other "Afrikanders" into the interior of the country, the primitive civilization of the Zulu, the Basuto, the Bechuana, the Matabele, the Hottentots has sometimes been profoundly modified, whilst at the same time veritable populations of hybrids have been formed in the Portuguese and Dutch colonies. Certain native kingdoms have been strongly shaken by religious quarrels in consequence of rivalries between Catholic and Protestant neophytes; thus, under the reign of Mtessa, who was a Catholic, the Uganda was bloody with a religious war which continued under Muanga, successor of Mtessa, and which did not come to an end till 1892 with the conversion of Muanga to Protestantism.

Here we have, assuredly, something new among the Negroes of Africa, and it can be said that, in a certain measure, the Europeanization of an important part of South Africa and the development that has there been given to Christianization have brought results, certainly not identical, but indeed comparable to those produced by the Islamization of a part of the Western and Central Sudan.

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See also bibliography Chapter IV, Africa in General

## CHAPTER VII

### POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

#### TYPES OF STATES—ROYAL AUTHORITY

##### *Types of States*

As we have seen, circumstances have frequently condemned the African Negro peoples to merely an embryo of political organization. It must not be deduced from this that anarchy was the norm amongst them. All that we know of their history in past centuries, and what we can observe even to-day, allows us to affirm that they are capable of conceiving and establishing governments worthy of this name, every time that conditions are favorable to it. For one meets in Negro Africa a whole series of States, ranging from the simple isolated family to confederations of kingdoms constituting empires.

It happens often enough that a territory, of relatively small extent, is divided among a considerable number of more or less distinct families, belonging to various clans, and that these families have not been able to foresee the advantages of uniting with each other or else have not had the possibility of doing so. Each one of them constitutes a veritable independent state, a tiny state, reduced sometimes to some hundreds of citizens and including only a single village, or only a miserable hamlet. Such a



situation, assuredly very unfavorable to the progress of civilization, is exhibited by a more or less intense crudeness and often barbarous customs. It has been said of the populations among whom this condition has been found, that they are individualists to the extreme. The word is exact only if one means by individualist the unity which constitutes the family cell. In fact these societies, divided into as many states as families, which may be observed in certain regions of the Black Volta, the Ogowe and elsewhere, are as eminently collectivist as the other African Negro societies; only here, the groups are numerically reduced, remain retired within themselves and do not cease to ignore each other's existence except for fighting. On the other hand, the "Family-State" is, of all political organizations of Negro Africa, the most solid, from the fact that the authority of its chief is uncontested, that those who are subject to the jurisdiction of this chief are of his own blood and that they are assembled around him at the same geographical point.

When circumstances have led a family to settle round about itself an appreciable number of its parts, thus populating an entire region with people of the same ancestry, the different villages inhabited by these people form together a State of some extent, remarkably homogeneous, which is constituted by one single clan or at least by a considerable portion of a clan. The patriarch of the first family founded is the natural chief of this "Clan-State," which now begins to cut a figure and to play a rôle of its own.

Another step is surmounted when families belonging to different clans, but having the same ethnic origin and speaking the same dialect, have consented to group themselves under the authority, more or less real, of one of the clans. We have then, according to whether these families of different clans are assembled in the same locality or dispersed across a province, the "Village-State" or the "Tribe-State," the direction of which is given over to a sort of council of elders, composed of the patriarchs of the various families and presided over by one of them; this latter is usually the chief of the clan to whom special circumstances, for example, the services rendered during an aggression coming from the outside, have given prééminence. Such a State already offers more analogies with the organisms which we commonly dignify by this name, but its functioning is, in general, less perfect than that of the Family-State and the Clan-State because of the dissimilarity of the cells whose total it represents and, in consequence, because of the less absolute authority of its chief: the latter being, very often, only the executive of the wills of the majority and having against him the opposition of a minority, variable in its number as in its elements.

Most of the time, it is the superior stage, which we usually call the "Canton-State," that dominates in Negro Africa. It is in reality a little kingdom, whose unity is of geographical rather than ethnic order. It is composed of several Village-States or Tribe-States, united under the authority of a superior chief who is the patriarch of the most

ancient family of the country or, very often, of a foreign family having acquired, by way of conquest, the exercise of power.

Thanks to fortunate wars or clever politics, the chief of a canton frequently comes to extend his authority over several neighboring cantons, sometimes of the same ethnic branch as his own, sometimes peopled by tribes of various origins and speaking different dialects: the political unity thus enlarged becomes a "kingdom," properly speaking.

At last, either as a result of conquest, or by free accord of the parties, several kingdoms may constitute a sort of federation, in which each one conserves its interior autonomy and its own government, under the suzerainty of the chief of the federation. It also happens that the governors, designated by the supreme chief, are substituted for the former kings. In one case and the other, there is an "empire," such as the ancient empires that formerly flourished in various regions of Negro Africa (Ghana up to the end of the eleventh century, Mali from the thirteenth to the fifteenth, Gao in the sixteenth, the Congo from the fifteenth to the eighteenth, etc.), or such as those which still exist to-day in the country of the Mossi and have functioned there for about eight hundred years.

Whatever be the degree attained by the political institutions of the African Negroes and whatever aspect the civilization of their various States present, their organization and functioning, everywhere and always, offer the same essential characteristics. It is remarkable how far the indications given in the

eleventh century by Bekri about the empire of Ghana, in the fourteenth by Ibn Batuta about the Mali empire, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by the chroniclers of Timbaktu about the empire of Gao, correspond with what we know from other sources of the former empire of the Congo, the former Bambara kingdoms of Segu and of the Kaarta, the former States of Coomassie and of Abomey, the present kingdoms and empires of the Jolof, the Abron, the Abeokuta, the Bagirmi, the Uganda, the Mossi, etc., and also with the practices observed in the innumerable Canton-States of the Sudan, of Guinea, of Central, Western and South Africa, and even, in a proportionate measure, in the modest Tribe-States and Village-States.

*Royal Authority*

In general, in each State the power is transmitted in a given family—the case of revolution aside—but it is not, properly speaking, hereditary, in the sense that it is not necessarily the natural and direct heir of the defunct chief who succeeds him. Besides the family who has the privilege of furnishing the king, there usually exist two others, one of which furnishes the elector or electors of the king, and the other the enthroner or enthroners. The choice of the electors cannot be exercised except within the limits of the royal family, but, with this exception, and taking account of public opinion expressed by the elders, choice is freely made; it is necessary, on the other hand, that the successor of the defunct

king should be designated by the elector or electors in order to be invested with authority. Furthermore, he cannot fulfill the royal functions unless he be regularly enthroned, according to consecrated rites, by the person or personages whom custom has appointed for the accomplishment of this indispensable formality.

Not only do the enthroners and the electors hold the power of making or not making kings, but they also possess that of unmaking them, so that their influence is considerable and they suffice, in themselves, to constitute an important counterbalance to the caprices of tyranny and the omnipotence of the sovereign.

The latter's authority is again counterbalanced by the obligation, imposed upon him by custom, of delegating a part of it to ministers, each of whom has definite functions. The king is not always master in naming or revoking at will, custom generally conferring each ministerial charge within a certain family, as is the case with the royal dignity and the function of elector or enthroner. Furthermore, with the king functions a sort of parliament composed of ministers and dignitaries designated by heredity under the conditions explained above, and also the patriarchs of certain families. We are then very far from the system of absolute monarchy which one is sometimes inclined to suppose exists in the Negro countries.

Besides, one must not forget a detail that has its importance: if the king does not belong to the family

of the first person occupying the ground, which inevitably happens when he descends from a conquering family, he has no rights over the ground even of his own kingdom; though he disposes of the life and death of his subjects, he is constrained, each time that the ground is in question, to incline before the authority of the patriarch of the group descended from the first occupants, be this patriarch the most miserable wretch of the kingdom and the most humble of the vanquished. The great Mussulman conquerors themselves, such as El-Hadj Omar and Samori, have always respected this custom and have never dreamed of arrogating to themselves any of the rights over the land that they occupied but regarding which they did not recognize their own right of disposal. Besides, even if the king belongs to an autochthonous family, he possesses only the bit of ground which constitutes the domain of his family alone; as for the other portions, he is obliged to address himself to the chiefs of the other autochthonous families.

It is because of this custom that, in all the African Negro collectivities comprising several families of various branches, especially in the villages whose inhabitants do not all belong to the same clan and in which the power is held by a clan of foreign origin, there exists, at the side of the political chief, a "master of the ground" or "chief of the land" who has no authority in political matters, but who alone has the power to administer the land, to proceed with the division of the ground, and to regulate

all questions pertaining to it, just as he is the only one qualified to exercise the sacerdotal functions and advantageously invoke the deified spirits of nature.

## CHAPTER VII

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See bibliographies of Chapters III to VI.

## CHAPTER VIII

### MATERIAL CIVILIZATIONS

DIVERSITY OF MATERIAL CIVILIZATIONS—INFLUENCE OF PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT — HABITATIONS — FURNITURE AND UTENSILS—CLOTHING AND DECORATION—FOOD AND DRINK—SKILLED OCCUPATIONS

#### *Diversity of Material Civilizations*

All those who have traveled in Negro Africa and have studied the inhabitants in their native environment have remarked how much more they differ from one another in the material manifestations of their activity than in their social customs, their religious beliefs and their intellectual and moral character. The reason for this seems evident: the race is everywhere the same, or very nearly the same while the physical environment varies from region to region. Every one knows that the influence of the physical environment makes itself felt especially in the domain of material facts and that, if these in turn influence the social and moral life of the people, they do not modify it except in the long run and often in a manner that is hardly perceptible.

#### *Influence of Physical Environment*

So it is, that there where tall grasses abound, straw roofs dominate, while they are replaced by flat roofs of clay in the more arid regions or in



those where farming absorbs almost the entire ground, or by leaves of palms or other trees in the great forest where tall grasses do not grow. But this does not prevent the roofs, whether they be of straw, clay or leaves, from sheltering the same mentality, imbued with the same beliefs. Here the domicile of the family is constituted by a group of cylindrical huts forming a circle, there by one unique and vast building with many rooms; but there as here, it is always the same family, based on the same principles.

That is why the Negro peoples of Africa, who present on the whole such a remarkable unity from the moral and social point of view, offer on the other hand such great diversity in respect to habitations, clothing and material life in general.

I should hasten to say that the difference in the physical environment and the economic situation does not always suffice to explain this diversity. Thus the *Jula* in the region of *Kong*, to take one example from among a hundred, dress themselves in ample and often elegant clothing, while the majority of the *Senufo*, in the midst of whom they dwell, go almost naked. Here motives of a historical order intervene: the *Jula* of *Kong* have come from a country of the North where their ancestors had learned to dress from peoples of the Mediterranean or Asiatic races with whom they had been for a long time in contact, while the *Senufo* have inhabited during thousands of years the same country where we see them to-day; the *Jula* have imported the habits contracted in the *Massina* which the *Senufo* had not had

the opportunity to contract. But from day to day, the contact of the Jula materially influences the Senufo and these, in their turn, begin to adopt, in greater and greater number, the wearing of the wide pantaloons, the great blouse called "bubu" and a hood, without this change of costume in any way modifying the depths of their mentality, for the costume does not make the monk. One can say as much for the Negroes of the coast, who love to deck themselves out in European suits and even in frock coats and who, underneath this sometimes grotesque vesture, remain the same as their congeners of the interior who are clothed only in a breech-cloth or a string.

*Habitations*

I have just spoken of habitations. They assume the most varied aspects among the African Negroes, ranging from the hemispherical huts of the Fulani nomads, entirely constructed of straw, in form closely related to the tent, that is abandoned as soon as the camping place is changed, to be reconstructed elsewhere again in a few hours, to the immense fortress in which the Dagari and other populations of the Black Volta succeed in lodging as many as 150 or more persons, to say nothing of the herds and provisions of grain and water.

The type most extensively found is perhaps the cylindrical hut of clay walls topped with a straw roof of dried grasses. It is met with in the region of the savannas from one end of Negro Africa to the other. Often the type is modified: thus, in the

French colony of the Ivory Coast, while the Malinke have conserved the common form, the Dan have built the summit of the cone with a view to arranging an attic room in the interior and have extended its base so close to the earth that it is impossible to enter the hut without bending oneself almost to the ground; the Senufo in the region of Koroko or Korhogo have fastened two walls to each other, each one forming a semi-cylinder, and have covered the whole with a roof that assumes the aspect of an egg divided in the direction of its length; certain Kulango have arranged a basement of stones below the clay of the walls; the Baule have applied the clay on a wooden wattling which constitutes the framework of the wall and have replaced the circular form by an ellipse that they have divided into several compartments; the Agni have deliberately adopted the rectangular form with a two-sided roof and ridge tiles; some of the coast populations have given four sides to their roofs and constructed their walls with the ribs of the palm leaf, without having any recourse to clay. Besides these, innumerable intermediate types could be mentioned.

The other model of habitation which is dominant, especially among certain Sudanese populations (Sarakolle, Bambara, Bobo, Gurunsi, Dagari, Hausa, etc.), is composed of a quadrangular clay wall with a flat roof constituting a terrace, made of round logs resting on the extremities of the walls and covered with mud. Sometimes, as at Jenne, these houses have a second story and windows; elsewhere, as among the Degha of Assafoumo, on the Ivory

Coast and among the Palaka of the same colony, they are extraordinarily low, but are so elongated that each one occupies the entire side of a street; elsewhere again, as in the vicinity of the Black Volta, they have that sort of fortress-like aspect of which I have already spoken, being divided into numerous rooms each one of which is reached by means of a ladder through a hole arranged in the roof.

I should also cite the grottos of the Tombo, dug in the rocky cliffs, and their houses of stones, the structures on piles of the Buduma of Lake Chad, the matting shelters of the Somali, and a multitude of other types of habitation.

Generally, the houses are arranged to form groups, each one of which serves as a home for one family, in the narrow sense of the word. For this purpose a dozen huts are placed in a circle around a central court and joined to each other by barriers or hedges of thorns; the ellipsoidal or rectangular houses are built in threes, forming three sides of a square court, the fourth side of which is completed by a barrier; each of the fortresses or immeasurably elongated buildings suffices to shelter a numerous family.

Little clay edifices, some ovoid, others cylindrical, topped with straw bonnets and resting on stones which separate them from the ground, are generally built near these habitations and serve as granaries.

Besides the ordinary houses, one often meets with structures which play a rôle that among us has fallen to public buildings of all categories. Some are meet-

ing halls, others are the official residences of chiefs, others again fill the office of mosques among the Mussulmans. These buildings, sometimes called "palaces" by certain travelers, are often no more than immense straw hives, like the mosque of Dinguiray (French Guinea), or well-constructed sheds, like the public house of Man or the former audience hall of the deceased chief Buake, among the Baule (Ivory Coast). Sometimes they have a more monumental aspect and do not lack a certain style, like the residence of the chief of Koroko, the former royal residence of Abomey and especially the numerous mosques with pyramidal or conical minarets and projecting small-beams that may be seen almost everywhere in the Sudan.

#### *Furniture and Utensils*

The furniture, always crude, comprises hardly anything but the beds, most of which are simple mats, stools of various forms, urns and calabashes playing the rôle of coffers, cupboards and receptacles for all sorts of purposes. Three lumps of hardened clay or three stones disposed in a triangle mark the place of the hearth and serve as a support for the kettle. Vases of clay and of wood, often ornamented and of a graceful aspect, a large wooden mortar with its pestle, or a mill composed of two stones, some spatulas for stirring the porridge, some wooden spoons, baskets in numerous forms, constitute the utensils of the household. An iron hoe with a very short wooden handle, takes the place of a plow, a shovel and a spade. An adze and a crude

ax are the tools of the carpenter; an iron bar serving as a hammer, a stone plate in place of an anvil, some pinchers and an ingenious bellows form the material of the smith. Flint-locks, most generally of stone, elsewhere bows and poisoned or non-poisoned arrows, lances, javelins or throwing knives of complicated and elegant forms, short sabers and straight-swords, large and small clubs are the arms of the hunters and warriors, certain of whom also utilize shields of leather or of basket work; the fishermen use various kinds of nets (seines, cast-nets, hoop-nets, etc.), weirs and often harpoons, and do not disdain even the line, held in the hand without the intermediary of a pole and not carrying a float.

*Clothing and Decoration*

It is the clothing which, perhaps, presents the greatest variety from one people to another. Sometimes one sees, especially among the Mussulmans, Negroes awkwardly clad in "bubus" and overcoats of cotton, of silk or of velvet, ornamented with very prettily worked embroideries; sometimes the costume is reduced to a short blouse without sleeves and to a sort of swimming trunks; sometimes the blouse and the trunks are missing, being replaced by a large loin-cloth of cotton or sometimes of bark, which is carried like a Roman toga, or by a simple strip of cloth passed between the buttocks; sometimes one perceives no other trace of clothing than a simple case into which the extremity of the sexual organ disappears, as among the Bassari of the upper

Gambia, the Lobi and the Birifor of the middle Black Volta, certain Bechuana of the Transvaal, or even a simple string, serving to hold this organ, as among many of the Bobo and the Dagari, or again an apron of leather which covers only the hind part of the body, as among the Sara of the Chari. The same is true of the women: by the side of Wolofs disappearing under five or six multi-colored loin-cloths and as many ample, long-sleeved tunics, one may meet *Senufo ladies* having no other clothing than a package of leaves or straw, not to mention the most frequent case, which is that of a *loin-cloth* fastened around the waist and leaving the torso naked.

However sumptuous or wretched their costume, Negro women always have a great love of ornamentation. Here also, what a diversity of manifestations! Gold and silver jewelry, generally of very great weight, but of a handiwork which is often very fine and sometimes of very artistic pattern, is spread in profusion on the body, the head, the hands and the feet of certain elegants of the Senegal, Guinea, the Ivory Coast and the Sudan; beads of all kinds, rings and ornaments of ivory or copper are seen almost everywhere; often, also, style demands that there be imbedded in the lips, little plugs of quartz, wisps of straw, or disks of ivory or metal, some of which are so large that the lip that carries them is transformed into a racket-like shape.

There is another sort of ornamentation, extremely common among the two sexes, which consists in decorating the skin of the cheeks, the forehead, the neck

or the chest, or all parts of the body at once, with scarifications in lines or in points, taking all sorts of forms, simple or complicated. Among some tribes, it seems that certain, at least, of these mutilations, are ethnic marks; among many others they have no other aim than to augment the beauty of the subject who bears them.

*Food and Drink*

Food is much less varied than clothing. All these peoples are nourished in nearly the same way. The basis of daily alimentation is either a semolina cooked by steam (couscous), or a paste made of boiled meal or of tubercles (yams, manioc, taro) or of large green bananas, the one or the other cooked in water and then mashed in a mortar. This is their principal food and takes the place of bread. One takes a mouthful from a bowl with the right hand, a ball is made of it which is dipped in another bowl holding sauce, generally rich in condiments, carefully avoiding the use of the left hand, which is reserved for impure contacts. When circumstances permit, the sauce contains pieces of fish or meat, which are usually eaten last. At the end one drinks a mouthful of water and washes the hand which served as a spoon and a fork.

With the exception of the Mussulmans the Negroes very willingly use fermented drinks, such as palm-wine, various beers made of cereals, a sort of hydromel, etc., not to mention alcoholic drinks of European manufacture. But these beverages are imbibed only between meals.



*Skilled Occupations*

With the exception of the artisans, the Negroes generally carry on their occupations outside of their villages and, save during the dry season, pass almost all their days in the fields. After having proceeded with a first clearing of the soil by chopping down the trees or putting fire to the bush, which has the advantage of destroying a great number of troublesome insects and of procuring for the soil a fertilizer of ashes, they turn over the earth by means of large spades with short handles, or else, when the humus is not very thick, they scrape it with the same instruments and spread it in embankments or in mounds in which they sow seeds or plant tubercles. Afterwards they must frequently weed it in order to prevent the young cereal sprouts from being choked. For certain species, such as rice, and several varieties of millet or of sorghum, they practice transplantation. After the crop is ripe, comes the particularly active period of the harvest, the building of mills, the threshing of the grain, the storing of the products in the granaries which surround their habitations. So the year flows by, in almost incessant work, rendered more difficult in the wooded zones by the necessity of cutting the boughs from the trees and of fighting against the invasion of the forest.

While the men tend to the larger part of the cultivation of the soil, the women go about their domestic cares, reduce the cereals to flour by mashing them between two stones or by crushing them in a

wooden mortar, fetch the provisions of water and firewood, prepare the meals, wash the clothes, clean and spin the cotton which the men weave and often aid the men with their agricultural labors.

Some populations, living on the shores of the great rivers or the sea, have made a specialty of fishing or of navigation, for example the Subalbe of Senegal, the Somono and Sorko of the Niger, the Buduma and Kuri of the Chad, the Banziri and Sango of the Ubangui, the "Krumen" of the eastern coast of Liberia and the western part of the Ivory Coast, etc.

Others are given almost exclusively to cattle-herding and cattle-raising; they are, in general, populations which, by their distant origins, are related, at least in part, to the white race: the Fulani of West Africa, the Masai in East Africa, the Vahimba or Bahima in Central Africa, not to speak of the Hottentots of South Africa, whose origin is more mysterious.

Industry is more extensive and more developed than is generally believed to be the case, even among very backward tribes. It is almost always the privilege of castes living outside the bounds of society, despised because of their pretended servile origin, at the same time petted because they are indispensable on account of the trades which they are the only ones to exercise, and feared because they are believed to be in possession of numerous magic secrets. One group devotes itself to the extraction and working of iron, another—or the feminine part of this group to the manufacture of pottery, another

to working in wood or wicker, another to the making of copper or copper ornaments, still another to gold or silver jewelry by means of the process of *cire perdue* or of the blowpipe. To these diverse categories of artisans must be added that of weavers, dyers, tailors, embroiderers, these latter not constituting in general a special caste. On the contrary, musicians, professional singers, poets, form castes to which Europeans give the generic appellation of the caste of the "griots."

Many of the Negroes devote themselves to commerce, especially ambulatory commerce, notably among the Sarakolle or Marka, the Jula and the Hausa. Some populations, as the Jula and the Hausa of the Sudaa, the Apollonians of the Gold Coast and the Ivory Coast, traverse considerable stretches of country, going to the north to fetch salt bars of Saharan origin and, in the zone neighboring the great forest, kolo-nuts, transporting on donkeys or bullocks, more often on the heads of men, the most varied products of local industry or European importation, gaining painfully, by this heavy toil, fortunes which are generally very meager, but which are nevertheless envied by the peasants. The latter profess a certain admiration for these peddlers who have become educated in many things by their travels and more or less polished by the frequentation of a variety of environments. But the mass of the population is given almost exclusively to agriculture; the land is at the same time the primordial divinity and the principal means of subsistence of the Negroes of Africa.

## CHAPTER VIII

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## CHAPTER IX

### PROPERTY

RIGHTS TO LAND—LAND SYSTEM—INDIVIDUAL AND  
COLLECTIVE PROPERTY—INHERITANCE—DEBTS

#### *Rights to Land*

Let us say a word about property, beginning with property in land. The ground, according to native conception, does not belong to anybody; neither does it belong to all, as has often been wrongly claimed. In law, it is considered as belonging to the first occupants in the persons of the autochthonous Negrillos or of the local divinities who have replaced them or are felt to represent them. In fact, the ground is a god that no one would think of appropriating to himself and still less of buying and selling. But, by offerings or sacrifices carried out in accordance with consecrated rites, the Negro family first arriving on the piece of unoccupied ground, obtained from the local divinity the right and the privilege to use this land, a right and a privilege which is transmitted in the same family from generation to generation.

No individual, no collectivity has, then, actual property rights to the soil, and no one can transfer rights to the land of which he is not the proprietor. But there exist in the hands of definite ethnic collectivities, each one constituted by the descendants

of the family first arriving on a piece of land and accomplishing the necessary rites, rights of usage and exploitation that the titular community can cede in whole or in part, gratuitously or for payment, to other collectivities or private persons, but always on condition of obtaining the authorization of the divinity by the accomplishment of new rites.

Each collectivity owning the rights to the use and exploitation of a given piece of land has a chief, who is generally the patriarch of the oldest family and who bears the title of "master of the ground." He is at the same time the grand priest of the local religion and the administrator of the soil; he is not necessarily the political chief of the country. The fact that he or his collectivity should fall under the yoke of an individual or collective conqueror takes from him none of his religious or landed prerogatives, and that is why, in many villages, cantons or kingdoms, one finds at the side of the political chief who holds the reins of State in his hands, a "master of the ground" who may be only a poor wretch, but who enjoys an intangible prestige and without whom the political chief can do nothing when it is a question of a sacrifice to be offered to the divinities of the locality or a distribution of farm lands. Conquest gives no rights to the soil conquered: this is a principle that has never ceased to be respected by the most famous Negro conquerors.

### *The Land System*

When a family finds itself crowded on its land, some of its members go and ask hospitality of an-

other family of the same clan which circumstances have favored with a territory vaster than their needs. This latter group welcomes their relatives, incorporates them into their midst, and divides the family ground with them. This happens daily even in our times.

However, it may happen—and it actually does happen—that no family or clan is in a position to receive the relatives who are not provided with arable land. In this case, the people in search of lands go and find a group belonging to another clan, sometimes to another tribe, and request of them the authorization to settle near them on a portion of the latter's grounds which have remained vacant. The authorization is rarely refused, but it includes two indispensable formalities: first the recognition, by the new arrivals, of the political supremacy and social preëminence of the first occupants, to whom the newcomers constitute, in a way, vassals or feudatories; and then the consent of the earth itself, which is solicited by the patriarch of the family already settled there, and accorded only on condition that the rights and privileges of this family remain intact. Sometimes the precarious character of the situation offered to the new arrivals is shown by the obligation imposed upon them, as well as upon their descendants, of each year remitting to the original family a part of the newcomers' harvest.

Of course I put aside the hypothesis of the employment of violence, which takes precedence over law in all countries of the world but does not annihilate it. If the newcomers have proceeded by way

of conquest and occupied by force the territory which they coveted, the first formality is naturally not complied with; but the second is fulfilled just the same, and, as we have seen above, the landed privileges of the former holders of the soil are respected by the conquerors. Failing this the latter would be persuaded that they had committed a sacrilege and that the earth, offended in its divine majesty, would revenge itself by refusing to produce.

It is equally possible for an individual, native or stranger, to obtain the right to use, for his personal profit, a given parcel of the land constituting the property of a collectivity. But the authorization which is given him is not, in principle, anything but a title which is revokable and temporary, although in fact it is generally for an indefinite length of time. At any rate, it is accorded only with the consent of the divinity and after a sacrifice offered by the patriarch, the victim of the ceremony being furnished by the grantee. Never can it include, for the benefit of the latter, the power to cede, gratuitously or for compensation, the right that he has acquired; if he ceases to make use of this land, it returns to the collective domain.

Agricultural work can be done in common by the entire collectivity holding the plot of ground, but it can also be carried on individually. The allotment made every year by the patriarch then takes place. Generally, the arable family land is divided between the different households or secondary families, each chief of a household or secondary family leaving his



lot undivided or distributing it in turn among the different individuals of one or the other sex, the sum of whom constitute his household or family. For certain products, it is customary that the men, women and children work in the same fields, together or separately, according to the nature and the exigencies of the task to be accomplished; other tasks are reserved to one or the other sex.

From the point of view of the land system, that which lives, sprouts or is naturally found on its surface or within it, is assimilated to the ground itself: wild animals, plants, minerals. In the same way, the waters of rivers, streams, lakes or ponds, as well as fishes and other beings contained in them, are also assimilated to it.

In principle, the family holding the rights to the use and enjoyment of a piece of land or water has the sole right to hunt or fish on this land, to gather the spontaneous products of its soil or to extract minerals therefrom. Nevertheless, people belonging to other families, even if they are strangers, are usually left free to hunt or fish individually on the common grounds of the family domain, on condition that they do not use dogs or traps for hunting, weirs or narcotic grasses for fishing, that they do not set fire to the bush and that they do not put up barrages on the rivers, all those operations which give to the hunt or to fishing an industrial character and are not licit except for the group holding the right to the ground, or for the groups that they may invite to participate in the great hunts or fishing parties organized by it. Furthermore, the hunter who has

killed a large piece of game on the grounds of which his family has not the use is obliged to give a part of the product of his chase as homage to the chief of the holding collectivity: for example, he gives this chief the right shoulder of a buffalo or of an antelope, one of the tusks of an elephant, etc.

As to the spontaneous products of the earth, such as wood, fruits of wild trees, bark for tanning, the heart or the sap of palm trees, the latex of rubber plants, etc., people who are strangers to the holding collectivity can exploit them only with the consent of the "master of the ground" of this collectivity and by the payment of a rent, often fixed at one-tenth of the products gathered or of their commercial value. It is the same for the exploitation of gold or other mines.

### *Individual and Collective Property*

Everything that is not land can be possessed in full property rights, with the right of transfer, whether by collectivities or individuals. The source of real property is work: the product of the work becomes the actual property of the author of the work, who may dispose of the product as he likes, giving it away or selling it, lending it with or without interest. If it concerns an individual, the product of his work will constitute, at his death, his estate; the fact of having purchased a thing, of having received it as a gift or as an inheritance confers the same rights as the fact of having created it by one's own work. If the author of the work is a collectivity, the product of this work constitutes

a collective property over which none of the members of the collectivity, including the chief himself, has a special right and which cannot be disposed of except with the agreement of the entire collectivity or its authorized representatives: such is the case of family property, of which the patriarch, chief of the family, is only the trustee and the administrator.

The farmer is not the proprietor of the ground which he cultivates, but he is of the cereals which he has planted and harvested, in the same way as he is of the salary that he gains in working for another, of the cattle and the slaves which he has bought or the wealth that he has acquired by inheritance.

### *Inheritance*

Only individual wealth is transmitted by inheritance. In principle the heir is always a single person, except among some Islamized peoples,—but it is admitted that he should, in some manner and in the measure that appears proper to him, allow his near ones to benefit, in the form of gifts, by a part of the succession which comes to him.

This sole heir is not everywhere the same relative. In the first place, it is indispensable that he should be of the same family as the deceased from whom he inherits: it follows that, there where the system of relationship through women holds, the son, for example, could not inherit from his father, while he can inherit from his mother, or from his maternal uncle, or from his brother on his mother's side; there where the reverse régime has the force of law,

the son can inherit from his father, his paternal uncle, from his brother by the same father, but he cannot inherit from his mother or from his mother's relatives. In virtue of the same principle, and whatever be the system of filiation adopted, the two spouses cannot inherit from each other; there is no exception to this rule except among certain Islamized Negroes.

Besides this, there exist tribes among whom the heir is, in principle, the oldest of the surviving relatives of the deceased, and others who attribute to the descendant the inheritance of the ancestor. The former of the two systems is the most widespread; there where it is practiced, the natural heir is, among the relatives of the defunct, the first-born of the oldest generation, that is to say, the grandfather or the oldest of the grand-uncles, or in default of relatives of this generation, the direct parent of the defunct or the oldest of his uncles, then the oldest of his brothers or first cousins, after which the oldest of his children or nephews or the children of his consins, and so on, not passing on to another generation until the preceding one has been exhausted. According to the second system, on the contrary, the succession is not attributed to the ascendants and to the collaterals except in default of descendants, and the normal heir is the oldest of the children of the defunct or the oldest of his nephews.

In law, women as well as men can inherit and, in the determination of the heir, there is no question of sex, but only of primogeniture. In fact, however, a woman is generally put aside for the benefit of the

man who comes immediately after her in the system of succession in vigor, because marriage forces her to reside in another family than her own and it is feared that she will spend the heritage for the benefit of the family of her husband, that is to say, to the detriment of the family of the defunct. We find here a new proof of the African Negro conception according to which, even when it is a question of individual property, the general interest of the collectivity must come before every other consideration. When the woman to whom the succession normally falls is a widow or divorced or too old to remarry, and she is reinstated in the domicile of her family, no difficulties are made in constituting her the heir in preference to a younger brother.

### *Debts*

The inheritance includes the liabilities as well as the assets of the defunct. If the heir does not settle the debts which have been handed down to him, they pass, when he in turn dies, to his successor, increased by interest, if this has been arranged for, cancellation never taking effect otherwise than by the complete payment of the sums due or by formal renunciation on the part of the creditor.

The obligations contracted by an individual are at his personal account or that of his heirs. The sentiment of collective responsibility is so highly developed, moreover, that the creditor, if he has to do with an insolvent or recalcitrant debtor, goes to the family of the debtor, who, after letting itself be

begged for the sake of form, always finishes by paying the debt from its collective wealth.

It is admitted that the debtor who cannot free himself has the possibility of giving a pledge to his creditor, in guarantee of his credit, for an indefinite duration, which cannot at any rate come to an end until the reimbursement of the sum due. This pledge may be any sort of object, or an animal, or a person, for example, a child or serf of the debtor; the latter, however, in no case can give his wife as a pledge, because she is not of his family. The creditor has the right to employ in whatever way he wishes, the object, the animal or the individual which has been given to him as a pledge, but he cannot sell it or give it in turn as a pledge; if it is a living being, he must furnish it nourishment and lodging, and have it cared for when it is sick.

Often, the creditor who has received a person as a pledge authorizes this person to remain with the debtor or in the family of the latter, reserving only the right to call for his help when in need of his services. In this case, he does not have to provide for his support, except during the periods when the former employs the latter.

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## CHAPTER X

### THE FAMILY

THE FAMILY AND THE TWO SYSTEMS OF RELATIONSHIP  
—THE PATRIARCH—MARRIAGE—COURTSHIP—POLYGAMY—  
FREE UNIONS—DIVORCE—DEATH OF A SPOUSE AND THE  
LOT OF WIDOWS AND ORPHANS

#### *The Family and the Two Systems of Relationship*

It is commonly said that the family is the basis of society among the Negroes. This is indeed exact, but we may ask how it could be otherwise. All societies are based on the family; one may only say that the fact is the more evident the less developed the social state: the primitives never dissociate themselves from the family, while advanced peoples tend to consider their members only as individuals.

Among the Negroes of Africa, the group to which we ourselves give the name of family, that is to say the group formed by the father, the mother and the children, has only a secondary importance. Often it does not even exist, in the sense that among many Negro peoples the husband of a woman is only the husband and not the father, meaning that he has no rights over the children born of his flesh: the children in this case, belonging solely to the family of their mother, and it is her eldest brother who exercises the paternal rights over them and who is responsible for their life and their actions.

I know very well that the African peoples among

whom this system is found are at present in the minority. But the fact that they exist and that they exist almost everywhere stimulates us to a closer study of the system. And then it is perceived that this custom, admitting relationship only on the mother's side, must have formerly been universally observed among the Negroes and that there still exist, at various stages, multiple and undeniable traces of it.

It seems indeed that the origin of the system of relationship through the mother used to be the only one in force, for the traditions which are the most ancient and the least susceptible of being spoiled by foreign interpretations all say that the founders of the most illustrious families were women. Even among the populations which have adopted masculine relationship as a common practice, it often happens that nobility and, if we may employ this term, nationality, is established only by relationship on the mother's side: this is what may be observed, for example, among the Wolofs of Senegal. The natives who practice this custom justify it by saying that one is always sure to be the son of his mother, while one cannot claim with certitude to be the son of the father.

One might be tempted to believe that the substitution of masculine relationship for that of feminine relationship is due to the influence of Islamism, but the facts contradict this hypothesis. Indeed, the peoples who are in the majority Islamized, as the greater part of the Fuani tribes and many of the tribes of the Malinke group, have not ceased to re-

main faithful to female filiation, whilst among the populations the most refractory to Islamization, there are some, like the Bambara, who have abandoned this system, without doubt since a very remote period, for that of relationship in the masculine line. What is more, the Arab traveler, Ibn Batuta, states that in the fourteenth century among the Walata people, who were devout and educated Mussulmans, the men were named according to their maternal uncle and not according to their father, and that it was not the son who inherited from the father, but the nephews, sons of the sister of the father.

The Arab authors who have spoken to us of Ghana and Manding in the Middle Ages observe that in these States, inheritance is transmitted, not from father to son, but from brother to brother on the mother's side or from uncle to the sister's son. According to native traditions, it is the Bambara who, the first in the Sudan, broke with this usage and it is from this that they take their name—*ban-ba-ra* or *ban-ma-na* signifying "separation from the mother,"—while those among the Wangara who remained faithful to the old customs received the name of Manding or Mande—*ma-nding* or *ma-nde* signifying "child of the mother." In our days, masculine relationship has persisted among the Bambara and has dominated among the Sarakolle and a part of the Mandingo or Malinke; but many of these latter admit only feminine relationship as conferring the right of inheritance and it is the same among most of the Fulani and Serers and among a considerable number of the Negro peoples of the Sudan,

of the Coast of Guinea and of sub-equatorial Africa.

This does not prevent the rôle of chief of the family from being filled by a man, even though occasionally it falls to a woman; but, among the populations which admit only female relationship, the chief of the family is the brother of the mother on her mother's side. Among other peoples it is the real father.

With one as with the other, the group forming the family, properly speaking, comprises all the living descendants of the same ancestor—female among the former, male among the latter—or at least all the descendants who inhabit the same locality or who live in relations with one another.

Thus comprised, the family is very different from what the word usually represents to our minds. Families counting hundreds are not rare and the practice of polygamy has often resulted in making this number even greater, so that it presents, in this respect, an importance that could not be attained by a simple "household." It also results that, marriage between relatives not being permitted and two spouses not being able, in consequence, to have the same ancestry, the wife is not a part of her husband's family; and it is actually so, at least in law.

The social unity constituted by each family is supplemented by a political unity; in matters of civil justice, as in every other matter, the family comes before the individual: Negro society is fundamentally collectivist.

*The Patriarch*

Each family has a chief, the patriarch, who is, in a general manner, the first born of the oldest generation. He is often designated by the name of "father" or of "grandfather," but often, also, simply by that of "old": that is, "the elder." He exercises over all the members of the family the same authority that is exercised among us by the father over his children, but his power does not extend outside these members themselves; the result is that, in a family based on masculine descent, the wives of the members of the family escape the authority of the patriarch and, inversely, in a family based on female descent, the husbands of the women members of the family do not belong to these families, but to the families of their mothers. From this principle there develop complicated situations of fact: the wife owes obedience to her husband, but not to the patriarch to whom her husband is related.

Whether the family be based on masculine or feminine relationship, its government can belong indifferently, at least in principle, to a man or a woman. In law, the function of the chief of the family falls to the one of the descendants of the common ancestor who is the first born of the survivors of the oldest generation. The succession to this function operates in the collateral line, from brother to brother or from cousin to cousin, without distinction of sex, until the complete extinction of the members of the generation, after which it passes

to the first born of the following generation, and so on.

As a matter of fact, women are seldom given this dignity, not because of an incapacity due to sex that primitive custom does not permit, but because, living with her husband, that is to say, in the bosom of a family which is not her own, she could not very well fulfill the duties required by the patriarchal functions. Besides, the command of the family is confided to her without any repugnance if she is a widow and if her advanced age leads to the belief that she will not remarry.

It sometimes happens also that the elders of the family agree to put aside the natural heir, even if he is a man, when he is weak-minded or afflicted with an infirmity which would render him inept for the position, or else when his prodigal temperament arouses the fear that he will dissipate for his own profit the family treasure whose administration is confided to him.

The functions of the chief of the family, if they constitute an honorary position, carry with them, in exchange, multiple and sometimes delicate obligations. First of all, the patriarch must see to it that order and concord reign among persons of all ages and both sexes who compose his family and whose number, rarely below twenty, frequently mounts to several hundreds, without counting the wives who, though not making part of his family juridically, are in fact incorporated into it; also without counting the descendants of slaves, who are a sort of family vassal or serf, sometimes more

numerous than their lords, and finally without counting the passing strangers. He must listen to the complaints of the persons under his jurisdiction, render justice in the midst of his social cell which in itself forms a little world, make himself its interpreter and its advocate in the differences that it may have with other families, answer for all that happens within the limits of his command to the political chief of the country and attend the meetings of the village council or the assembly of the elders of the tribe.

To these social, judiciary, and political functions, the patriarch joins the sacerdotal functions of which we will speak in another chapter and, besides this, the functions of the manager of the family grounds and the administrator of the family property. It is he, in fact, who is the keeper and the trustee of the rights and privileges acquired by the ancestor, for himself and his descendants, over the portion of the ground where the family has been founded. It is his duty, at the beginning of each agricultural season, solemnly to renew the pact concluded formerly between this ancestor, whom he continues and represents, and the deity of the ground; lacking these renewals the ground would refuse to produce and the family would be reduced to famine or the necessity of emigrating. He has equally the duty of proceeding each year, with the allotment of the arable lands among the households or, if cultivation is carried on in common, first with the division of the labor and then with the division of the harvest. He must determine what portions of the land should be

left fallow for the time being and those which it would be well to turn into a sort of commons, on which all the members of the collectivity and its guests can harvest the spontaneous products (herbs, food or medicinal plants, firewood and building-wood, oleaginous seeds, raw materials intended for industry, etc.), or the portions on which they can go hunting under conditions regulated by local custom, or again, where they can proceed with the extraction of clay and ores.

Finally, as already said, he must administer the family treasure, with prudence and for the sole profit of the collectivity, for he is only the responsible manager and does not in any sense own the property or have the free disposition of it.

### *Marriage*

In reality, nowhere among the Negroes is the wife considered as incorporated into the family of her husband; after marriage she continues to be a part of her own family, but she is withdrawn from it for the time being for the profit of her husband and, in consequence, for the profit of his family.

This is why the custom universally admitted in Negro Africa demands, in order that the union should be valid and regular, that the family of the future husband pay to the family of the future wife an indemnity, in compensation for the wrong caused to the latter family by the abduction of one of its members. It is not, as has been wrongly claimed, the buying of the wife by the husband, for the wife does not legally cease to belong to her own family



and in nowise becomes the property of the husband whom she marries; there is only the payment of an indemnity or, more exactly, of a surety, which varies enormously according to the district and according to the position of the future couple, ranging from several thousand francs to an object that is worth only a few centimes; in the latter case there is only the accomplishment of a simple formality, demanded by respect for old traditions.

In certain regions exists a custom which was general in former times and which consisted in paying to the family of the future wife a veritable compensation in kind in the form of another woman: the sister of the future husband was given in marriage to the brother of the future wife.

This custom has been in force in a great number of regions, especially among the most backward peoples. But it presents notable inconveniences: on the one hand, it may be that one family has more young men to marry off than the other family possesses young girls, or inversely, or else that one has no nubile daughter to give in exchange for the one it wishes to obtain, so that it is often impossible to arrange the projected unions; on the other hand, the two households simultaneously constituted are, in a way, bound together, and the rupture of one of them risks entraining that of the other; for example, if one of the wives happens to be repudiated by her husband and returns to her family, this family is obliged to return to the other family the exchanged woman that had been received from it.

So the majority of the African Negro peoples have

abandoned this system and substituted for the exchanged or replacing woman a value in animals, fabrics or specie, which we commonly call a "dowry" and which, in reality, is a value representative of the woman received and at the same time a security. Furthermore, instead of limiting matrimonial alliances to a too restricted circle of two families, it has become general to take a wife in any family whatsoever with the exception of one's own, respecting, however, the prejudices of caste.

The "dowry," when it concerns a man taking a wife for the first time, is levied on the family wealth. For it is considered the duty of a family to secure a wife for each of its male members. If a man already married takes a second wife, he must personally undertake the expense of the "dowry." In both cases, the payment is made to the family of the future wife, except among certain Mussulman populations, where the custom has come to prevail of transforming the "dowry" into a dower, which becomes the property of the wife herself.

The remittance of a woman-in-exchange or of a compensating "dowry," however small the latter might be and even if it constitutes only a simple formality, is necessary in order to legalize the marriage. Besides, it is necessary that the accomplishment of the marriage be preceded by a series of steps, regulated by custom, which correspond, in a certain measure, to the formalities which take place in France with a view to assuring a certain publicity to legitimate unions and of giving them, by means

of delays imposed by the law, a certain guarantee against surprises or possible mishaps.

### *Courtship*

In general, it is the members of castes (blacksmiths, shoemakers, "griots," etc.) who proceed directly with the preliminary negotiations. These negotiators play, according to circumstances, the rôle of witnesses, if it happens that later there are disputes, especially if one day the question of divorce should be raised. It is only when once the terms of the contract have been agreed upon by the intermediaries that the future husband, from now on accepted as fiancé, is authorized to enter into direct relations with the family of the future wife.

But these relations are limited in general to visits of politeness made to the parents of his fiancée, without seeking to see the latter and without pronouncing her name or without asking any news of her, decorum being opposed to this. At each one of his visits he brings little presents to the father and especially to the mother of his fiancée. On the other hand, he arranges to render them services and, notably with the aid of comrades of his own age, to cultivate the field of his future father-in-law and to aid him with the harvest. Generally, once the harvest is gathered, the future husband may court the future wife herself; he then offers her presents—cloth, jewelry, cattle, etc.—whose total value often surpasses considerably the amount of the "dowry" deposited or to be deposited by his family. These presents, called very inexactly "little dowry" by

many Europeans are at the personal expense of the fiancé or of his family and become the personal property of the future bride.

This period which we commonly call the "engagement," lasts several months and sometimes several years. The future husband tries to shorten the length of time, because it is very burdensome for him; the future wife and her family, on the contrary, do everything possible to prolong it, because it is for them an opportunity for revenues which will cease the day of the definitive accomplishment of the marriage.

This day at last fixed, generally on condition of a supplementary present made to the mother of the fiancée by the future husband or his family, and the "dowry" paid over, either in totality or in part, the remainder then being remitted in one or two installments after the marriage, according to what has been agreed upon, the young girl is led by her mother and her friends, or by the negotiators of the union, to the mother of the bridegroom, who gives her over into the hands of her son. Except among peoples who have been Islamized or Christianized, the accomplishment of the marriage does not, in general, give place to any definite ceremony or rejoicing.

The negotiations, formalities and other preliminaries of which we have spoken do not attain their full amplitude and complexity except among noble or rich families. Among proletarians and the poor, all this is simplified: negotiations are conducted rapidly; the period of engagement is brought to a minimum duration; the presents made by the fiancé con-

sist only, for the parents, of a few jars of palm wine or beer made from cereals, some kolo-nuts or some tobacco leaves, and for the bride, some beads; as for the "dowry," it can be reduced to the value of a few francs, while among the rich it often mounts to several thousand francs.

A very widespread custom, especially among families who pride themselves on being of the nobility, consists of engaging their daughters while still under age, sometimes even before their birth. The marriage not being able to be fully accomplished until the future wife has reached the age of nubility, the period of engagement can, under these conditions, last some fifteen years, to the great pleasure of the young girl's family who, during all this time, is more or less supported by the fiancé. Furthermore, the latter was generally already a grown man when his bride, still in the cradle, was promised to him, so that the great difference of age which exists between the two fiancés never incites the young girl to hasten the marriage.

The existence of this custom is sufficient to show that the consent of the bride was not demanded. In law, there is never a question of this consent, even when the union is decided at a time when the young girl is completely at an age to express her opinion. In law, equally, the consent of the groom has also not to be solicited, at least when he takes a wife for the first time. According to the principles adopted among the Negroes, marriage is the result of a contract between two groups, in the case in point, two families, and not at all between individ-

uals. It even happens that the choice of the two future spouses is made by the patriarchs of the two families, without the direct parents of the fiancés even being sounded in the matter.

In fact, however, affairs do not take place with such rigor. Not only have the parents of each of the young people a voice in the matter, not only is the young man to be married frequently the first to point out the young girl who pleases him and to get his parents to obtain her for him, but the young girl herself is often in accord with the young man even before the beginning of official negotiations; if not, she is apprised of what is going on with regard to her, by indiscretions, usually intentional, of her mother and father; she does not trouble herself to make known her opinion, and she may succeed, if she knows how to manage, in putting aside a person who is not agreeable to her.

### *Polygamy*

Polygamy is everywhere authorized, but it is not a constant practice. In fact, the number of wives is proportionate to the wealth of the husband. The security paid for the first wife is, as has been said, generally paid by the father or the chief of the family of the fiancé, who, not being married, is not free from his father's power; but, for the other wives, it is the husband himself who has to meet the expense: thus the poor are almost all monogamous by necessity.

Polygamy is, as we have said, everywhere admitted except among a few Christianized peoples.

Among the Mussulmans the number of legitimate wives that the same husband can simultaneously possess is limited to four. Among the animists, this number has no other limits than the financial resources of the husband.

In practice, hardly any one but the kings and the chiefs of some importance can afford the luxury of a half score of wives, or even, as the case has sometimes been observed, of several hundreds of them. One meets many husbands having two wives, a certain number having three or four, but the great majority of the Negroes are monogamous as a matter of fact and through necessity. In several provinces, also, notably in the domain of the Bantu of Equatorial and South Africa, the number of men arriving at a mature age without being able to free themselves from celibacy is considerable, because the excessive polygamy of the chiefs renders the total of available women inferior to the number of men of marriageable age. Here we have a situation which illustrates in a striking fashion one of the inconveniences of the system of polygamy when it is carried to excess.

When it is only practiced in a reasonable measure, polygamy does not seem to give rise, among the Negroes, to appreciable evils and it even offers real advantages in the actual state of their civilizations. The household duties, which, with them as elsewhere, are incumbent upon the women, are heavier in Africa than in Europe, as much from the necessity of going to the wells to fetch water and of hunting for firewood far from their habitations, of daily

grinding the flour, preparing the meals with the aid of rudimentary utensils, etc., as because of the inexistence of servants following the suppression of slavery, which wage-earners have not as yet succeeded in replacing. Moreover, as soon as a monogamous household has several children, the task of the wife becomes so crushing that she is the first one to solicit her husband to take a second wife.

Custom has provided, not only for the reciprocal obligations of the two spouses of a monogamic union, which are sensibly analogous to those of the two spouses in a European household, but also for the obligations of the polygamous husband toward his several wives and the latter's obligations toward each other. The husband has the right to portion out the household tasks among his different wives, but he owes to each one an equal treatment in generosity and in conjugal relations. The first wife is always the mistress of the house and the others owe her obedience and respect, but the latest wife is, in general, freed from certain drudgery, at least at the very beginning of the union. When one of the wives has little children and she happens to fall sick or die, the others must take care of her children, and, if necessary, give them the breast if they are able to do so.

### *Free Unions*

Aside from legal marriage, there may exist—and there actually do exist—free unions, contracted by the direct accord of the two parties, often with the agreement, at least tacit, of their respective fami-



lies, without any payment of a "dowry" or preliminary negotiations. It is a fairly frequent case among certain peoples, especially among the poorer classes.

Outwardly, nothing distinguishes these unions from regular families and those who practice them are not the object of any reproach or of any lack of consideration. But the man who lives in this state is regarded as celibate and, even in the countries where filiation in the masculine line is observed, children born of such unions have no father and belong to the family of their mother, to whom it is necessary to give them in case of the rupture of the union, whatever be the motive of this rupture.

At any rate, a union contracted freely can be regularized afterwards, by means of the payment of a "dowry," if the two families agree in the matter. Then the children born before the regularization are legitimized.

### *Divorce*

Divorce is admitted by custom but there is an attempt to limit the practice of it by disadvantaging the one of the two spouses who provoked or solicited it, or the family to whom the member belongs, whatever may be the reciprocal wrongs of the two parties. If it is the husband who repudiates the wife, the "dowry" is given back by her family to the family of the husband, but the presents that the fiancé made to the parents of the fiancée remain acquired by them in totality, as do also the expenditures of the fiancé or his family during the period

of the engagement. If, on the contrary, it is the wife who, having deserted the conjugal domicile, refuses to return to it, or who solicits the divorce, custom demands from her family, besides the reimbursement of the "dowry," that of all or part of the presents received and the expenditures effected.

As for the children born previously to the divorce or in the nine or ten months which follow it, their lot is regulated according to the system of filiation current among the people: they belong to the family of the father there where the system of relationship through men is in vogue, to the family of the mother where the opposite system holds. Nevertheless, in the first case, the infant children or those to be born are left to their mother as long as they cannot do without her care, on condition that the father or his family indemnify the mother for this care when she sends them back to him.

In brief, when there is a rupture of the marriage as a consequence of divorce, the repudiated wife returns to her family, who gives back to the family of the ex-husband the security that had been received from it. At least, such is the principle; it can undergo attenuations from the facts of particular circumstances. As for the children born of the broken union, they belong to the family of the mother among the populations which admit only female relationship; among the others they are generally allotted to the father, but on condition that his family renounce the reimbursement of the security paid. Sometimes, when there are several children there is a friendly division among the two families.

*Death of a Spouse and Lot of Widows and Orphans*

When a matrimonial union comes to be ruptured by the decease of the wife, the "dowry" remains acquired by the family of the defunct, as well as the totality of the presents received during the period of the engagement, and the children, according as it has to do with the régime of masculine or feminine filiation, remain with their father or pass to the family of their mother.

If it is the husband who happens to die first, things may take place in two different ways: among certain populations, the widow or the widows return to their respective families, who then refund the "dowries" to the family of the defunct husband, and the children are attributed, according to the established régime of relationship, either to the family of their father or to that of their mother; among other populations, the marriage is not considered as ruptured, but the heir of the deceased husband substitutes himself for the latter and becomes the legal father of the children and the legal husband of the widow, the "dowries" being retained by the families who have received them. In the latter case, if the heir happens to be the son of the deceased, he may not have carnal relations with the wives of his father, one of whom is, moreover, his own mother, and he contents himself with providing for their support, or else he marries them off, in exchange for a "dowry" which is then paid to himself, to one of his relatives or friends.

In case of the death of a parent, the non-emancipated children [those still under the paternal power], that is to say, the celibates—because emancipation can result only from marriage—form part of the heritage of that one of their parents to whom they are related by the only ties of relationship that local custom recognizes. There where the relationship in the feminine branch is the only one admitted, the children do not change their status at the death of the father, who is considered as being nothing to them [legally]; at the death of their mother they are allotted to her heir, that is to say, in general, to the eldest of her brothers on her mother's side who, during the lifetime of his sister, has already exercised paternal rights over them. On the contrary, where relationship on the father's side is the only one recognized, the children, belonging legally to their father do not change their status at the death of their mother; at the decease of their father they are allotted to his heir, who may be his eldest brother or his eldest son; in the latter case, it is the eldest son who becomes the legal father of his brothers, under the tutelage of some older relative, if the son is still a child.

We see that the application of these various customs resolves, in a very satisfactory manner, at least from the economic point of view, the question of widows and orphans, sometimes so distressing in European societies.

It has been well said that there are no orphans among the Negroes. It may be added that neither are there any widows, or widows exposed to pov-

erty, for the widow returns to her family and remains at its expense as long as she is not remarried, at least if she does not make part, as it often happens, of the inheritance of the deceased husband and so falls to the charge of his heir.

Thus the collectivism of relatively primitive societies, if it strikes at individual liberty and paralyzes progress by preventing the constitution of an élite, shows itself, in certain regards, more humane and more helpful than the individualism, sometimes so selfish and savage, of the more evolved civilizations.

## CHAPTER X

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## CHAPTER XI

### SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

#### THE CLAN—SOCIAL CLASSES—CASTES—SLAVERY—AGE CLASSES

##### *The Clan*

The clan, among the African Negroes, is nothing more than the enlarged family. We have seen that the family is composed of all the descendants of a common ancestor living in the same place. We may define the clan as the ensemble of the families of the same distant ancestor, or, if one prefers, all of the descendants of a common ancestor living in different places.

In the beginning, the clan and the family were confounded with each other, as long as the habitat of the descendants of the ancestor was concentrated at the same point. But a day arrives when the number of the descendants grows to the point where the ground acquired by the ancestor becomes insufficient to feed them; it may also happen that a quarrel intervenes between one part of the family and the rest of the community. In one and the other of these two cases, a part of the family, under the leadership of the oldest man of its group, separates from the initial nucleus and goes off in search of new lands, still vacant, where it can settle, or of a foreign family who is willing to welcome it and, in a certain

measure, to incorporate it into their group. Once separated from the initial nucleus, this part constitutes a new family, having as chief or patriarch the one who directed the migration; but it does not cease for this reason to remain attached by ties of blood to the family from which it has issued and with which it continues to form a single clan. It is the same, afterwards, for all the secondary families who branch off, for analogous motives, from one or the other of the two primitive families.

All these families together constitute a clan. Each of them is called by the Mandingo *lû* or *dû* (family habitation) or again *gba* or *gwa* (hearth); the clan resulting from their summation is called by the same people *niagha* or *niâ*, that is to say, "nest."

It is indeed evident that the unity of the clan cannot present the same unity as the family. As long as the different families of the same stock remain in reciprocal relations, whether they live in the vicinity of one another, or because a natural road of communication, such as a navigable stream, facilitates an exchange of visits between them, the clan represents a certain solidarity and can even have a single chief, who is the patriarch of the family from which the others have gone forth. But if the dispersion becomes accentuated, it inevitably carries with it a diminution in the frequency of intercourse and a loosening in the solidity of its bonds. The command of the clan can no longer be exercised in fact and the chief of the clan has no longer any authority except over some families living in the proximity of his own. With time, traditions themselves become

obscured and the groups of the same clan finish by not knowing each other, all the more so when several of them, settling in foreign parts, have forgotten the language of their ancestors and have adopted another, thus acquiring, up to a certain point, a new nationality.

However, secular customs, very generally observed, furnish to the divers members of the same clan the means of recognizing themselves as relatives and, according to circumstances, of practicing toward each other a solidarity analogous to that which prevails among the members of the same family. These customs have to do principally with the use of a certain name for each clan and the practice of a common taboo for all the members of the clan. By unanimous accord of the natives questioned in this regard, it seems that it is the common ancestor of the clan who instituted this name and this taboo and solemnly transmitted one and the other to all his descendants to come.

The name of the clan, among many peoples, and especially in the Sudanese zone, is carried in an invariable fashion by the members of the clan, who express it at the end of their individual name, just as we place our family name after our given name: thus *ɲone* would have, among the Mandingo, individuals called *To Diâra* (that is to say, *To of the Diâra clan*), *Bala Kulubâli* (*Bala of the Kulubâli clan*), *San Bamba* (*San of the Bamba clan*), etc. Elsewhere, for example among the Fulani and among numerous populations of the Gulf of Guinea and of sub-equatorial Africa, there is no custom of habitu-



ally designating people by attaching the name of their clan to their individual name, but this clan name exists none the less and it is used when one wishes to designate collectively the members of the same clan: amongst the Fulani, for example the Diallubé are put in opposition to the Hanhanbé, that is to say, the people of the Diallo clan to the people of the Kan clan.

The name of the clan always recalls, in one manner or another, the origins of the clan or the circumstances of its foundation. Thus *Diâra* is an abbreviation of the phrase *a bo-ra Diâ-ra* (he has come from Diâ or the western Massina), which preserves the memory of the place from where the migration of the ancestor set out; *Kulubâli* is a negative participle signifying "who has not been transported by boat" and carries an allusion to the miraculous fashion in which the ancestor, pursued by enemies, was able to put a river between them and himself, thanks to the obliging act of a large fish who carried him across the water on its back; *Bamba*, the name for crocodile, recalls that the ancestor, on the point of being seized in a grotto by a crocodile, escaped from it, thanks to a cricket who had dug a hole in the top of the grotto, a hole which the ancestor was able, by enlarging, to utilize for saving himself.

It will be noticed that in this last example, where the clan bears the name of an animal, it is not that of the animal respected by the clan, in this case the cricket, but on the contrary that of the animal from whose attacks the ancestor was able to escape by the

intermediary of the former. Such a circumstance, common to all cases of this kind, is to be opposed to the belief that there is a trace of totemism in the fact that several African Negro clans bear the names of animals.

The various languages used in Negro Africa designate, in general, the name for clan by an expression that may be translated by "honorific term" or "title of nobility," as *diamu* (that which grows larger) in Mandingo or *yettôdé* (that which honors) in Fulani. To this fact may be related the usage, universal among the Negroes, consisting of calling some one by the name of his clan when there is an intention of rendering homage or of being agreeable to him; thus one affirms that this individual has ancestors that are known and, in consequence, that he has, as we say, birth, or family.

However, the name of the clan does not always suffice to permit two persons who do not know each other to recognize that they are of the same ancestry. It happens, in fact, that in changing the language, the families have changed the clan name, be it that they have, in some manner, translated the original name of their clan into the adopted language, or that they have substituted for it the name of a clan of their adopted country which has the same taboc as their own clan and thus appears to present some analogy with the latter. For example, a Senufo of the clan Sorocho, in acquiring Mandingo nationality, becomes a Kulubâli, while a Senufo of the clan Yého becomes a Watara. In this case of two individuals not speaking the same language and

bearing the names of different clans, it is by the community of taboo that they recognize in each other—or believe that they recognize in each other—a common origin.

The taboo has been instituted by the ancestor at the same time as the name of the clan. Generally, it deals with the animal species a representative of which had saved the ancestor in some critical circumstance, but it may also deal, for similar reasons, with a vegetable species (rice, for example, or a variety of rice) or a category of manufactured objects (blue cloth, for example) or a certain human group (another clan, a caste, etc.). The Diâra have for taboo the lion, because their ancestor, while still an infant and on the point of dying of inanition, his mother having no more milk, was suckled by a lioness. The Kulubâli, of course, have for taboo the fish which helped their ancestor; the Bamba, the cricket who saved theirs from the mouth of the crocodile.

In the course of time another analogous circumstance could have led less distant ancestors to institute secondary taboos which were added to the primary taboo. Sometimes the latter falls into disuse in one of the groups of the clan, to the advantage of a newer taboo, while it still continues in another part of the clan. It is thus that the Kulubâli have, as a first taboo, the fish which has been spoken of (a variety of river silurus) and, as a secondary taboo, the leopard: those of them who live near the Niger, where the fish in question abounds, consider it always as their principal taboo; but those others

who live far from the river have allowed the leopard to take precedence over the absent fish.

These taboos of the clan complete, in a fashion, the exterior mark constituted by the name of the clan: it is a sort of coat-of-arms which is added to the title of nobility. By the magical conception which presides over their functioning they are in no way distinguished from other collective (village, tribe, caste) or individual taboos. The animal sacred to the clan is not the object of any worship. It is only believed that members of the clan should abstain from molesting, killing, eating, or even touching it, and that transgressors expose themselves to death or some grave sickness. Indeed, when by carelessness one has touched an individual of the tabooed species, he offers a sacrifice to turn away chastisement; but it is not to the tabooed object that the sacrifice is offered: it is to the ancestor. For is it not this latter who has made the animal sacred for his descendants and has vowed to the worst misfortunes those who do not respect the taboo pronounced by him? So it is he alone who has the power to avert the chastisement which he alone had, in advance, pronounced.

Whatever be the apparent fragility of the bonds which unite the members of the clan, this institution presents a social and political importance which cannot be neglected. In fact, the members of a given clan, even if they do not know each other and have never seen each other, even if they belong to different nationalities must mutually aid and assist each

other in all the circumstances of private and public life. An individual cannot be a witness at law against a person who belongs to the same clan as himself, even when he knows pertinently that the wrongs have been on the side of this person. If a part of the clan goes off to war, the other parts, though they have no interest in the quarrel, are obliged to take part against the enemy of the first.

It often happens that between two clans, distinct by their ancestry, a sort of alliance is established which binds them to each other in the same manner as the former alliance. This alliance is of a matrimonial order and comes from the fact that the men of one of the two clans take wives from among the other, and reciprocally (for example, clan Keïta and clan Konte among the Mandingo of the Malinke group); sometimes this alliance comes to pass in consequence of divers circumstances. According to a rather curious custom, two individuals, belonging respectively to two clans thus allied to each other, may insult each other without the result being in any way vexatious, while under any other conditions the Negroes are extremely touchy in this regard.

In general the members of a clan do not marry within their own clan, but exogamy is not raised to an absolute rule. If it is usually observed, it is because the members of the same clan who know each other sufficiently to be tempted to marry one another are related in a degree which is considered too near for marriage to be allowed. But numerous examples of marriages between men and women of

the same clan may be cited when the community of ancestry goes back a great many generations.

*Social Classes*

However primitive the Negroes appear to us, they have not escaped from the phenomena of the division of society into social classes. They have a nobility, composed of all those who can establish their genealogy and show that they have a right since a far-flown epoch, to the name of an honored clan; and then there is the class of serfs, constituted by the still surviving slaves, who do not know their ancestors, and especially by the very numerous descendants of slaves who, although flaunting in general the name of the clan of their lords, cannot trace their genealogy to an ancestor who was not of servile condition. The former, the nobles, are called "the good men" (compare with our term "gentleman"); the others are designated by the simple expression "men" or by that of "common men."

In sum, whoever is born of ancestors of free status and can prove this birth, is noble: thus the word "born" is often employed among the Negroes in the sense of "noble." As with us, those who are not "born" are placed theoretically at the foot of society; but, as with us also, they may, in practice, outstrip the nobles, if they have tact, special knowledge, wealth or simply luck. In fact, the majority of the influential councilors of the great chiefs are proletarians. Furthermore, because of the suppression of slavery by the European nations who are to-day masters of Africa and because of the tolerance with

which the noble families allowed their serfs to bear the name of the clan of their masters, it is very difficult to distinguish those who are really nobles from those who are not. It is power and wealth, the one procuring the other, which more and more are substituted for nobility of origin, and among the African Negro peoples who are the most developed, social distinctions, properly speaking, tend to give place to a simple distinction, which is, moreover, very difficult to delimit, between the rich and the poor.

At all events, among these same populations who are particularly advanced and often, although to a lesser degree, among the others, one recognizes easily enough the descendants of the old families by their more distinguished manners, by their better education. The Negroes reputed to be the most uncivilized are in general very strict in the matter of etiquette and politeness and, when one sees a man not conforming exactly to accepted usages, interrupting the word of an elderly person, not inviting a visitor to be seated or not asking the aim of his visit, who neglects—if he is clothed in a breech-cloth—to uncover his torso when he addresses a superior, who abbreviates the complicated series of salutations, in brief, who lacks in any way good breeding, it is said of him: “He has not been softened,” that is to say, “he is not refined,” but it is also said. “He is not a good man,” in the sense that an Englishman would say “He is not a *gentleman*.”

But these are distinctions which are fairly subtle and in which the appreciation of one individual by

another plays a preponderant rôle. It is quite otherwise for the collective social distinctions based on the caste system.

### *Castes*

The majority of African Negro peoples divide society into two categories: at the summit of the ladder are placed all those who do not belong to the castes called craftsmen; to the foot of the ladder are relegated the artists and the artisans, themselves divided into numerous castes, which are impermeable and hierarchically arranged.

It is not work in itself that debases; the nature of the work done plays a large part. The working of the soil is the most noble of all, doubtless because it implies a direct alliance with the deity of the ground.

Immediately after the work of the fields ranks such occupations as cattle-raising, hunting, fishing, the gathering of the spontaneous products of the soil, the construction of houses, navigation, commerce, the extraction of gold, the preparation of beer, oil, soap. Among certain peoples, there is assimilated to this category even trade occupations of relatively recent introduction, such as the spinning of cotton or wool, the making of clothing, the art of embroidery, dyeing, in a word, everything that has to do with the clothing or textile industry; among certain others, these same occupations are reserved for special castes, as for instance the trade of mason.

But everywhere, it is into one or another of the castes which are, in some way, under the ban of



society that are classed the story-tellers, poets, mimes, singers, musicians (that is to say, the artists), and the charcoal-burners, the smiths, the jewelry makers, the potters, the carpenters, the basket-makers, the shoemakers (that is to say, the workers in metal, clay, wood and leather).

On the other hand, it must be noted that it is not the fact of giving oneself individually to such and such a kind of work which ennobles or debases, but rather the fact of belonging, by birth, to a group which, on the whole but not necessarily in totality, exercises hereditarily such and such a trade. A farmer by birth may, by personal taste, set to work with iron: he will not be on that account put into the caste of blacksmiths and will in no way lose the honorable reputation that he has inherited from his ancestors. Inversely, a man born into the blacksmith caste may never have worked with iron and may be engaged exclusively in agriculture: that would not prevent him from being condemned to remain in the blacksmith caste and to continue to submit to the contempt of which this caste is the object. One is born outside of caste or one is born into the category divided into castes, and nothing can be done in this latter case to escape from it.

On the contrary, an individual of the non-caste category may be incorporated into the other category, and an individual of a given caste can leave it to enter another caste on condition that the latter is esteemed inferior to the former. This happens when a non-caste man marries a woman of caste, or when a caste man marries a woman belonging to an

inferior caste; the case is the same for a non-caste woman or a woman of superior caste who marries a caste man or a man belonging to an inferior caste. In a word, by the effect of marriage, one may descend, but one can never elevate himself. It is to be noted that this consequence of matrimony is exclusively limited to the cases where there is a question of caste: in the times of slavery, the marriage of a free man with a slave woman or of a free woman with a slave resulted in freeing the slave.

The people of caste are looked down upon, not because of the trade that they exercise—or do not exercise—but because of the fact that they are born into a caste. Among the Mandingo, this contempt is marked by the appellation *niama-kala*, which signifies “bit of trash.” However, this contempt does not prevent them from being respected, feared and accorded numerous privileges. They are respected because they are considered necessary to society, which without them would have neither pleasures, tools, arms, household utensils, decorations, foot-gear, nor sometimes clothing, there where the weavers form a caste. They are feared because they possess secrets unknown to the masses of the population and because the possession of these secrets is attributed to their relations with deities unknown to the common people: so it is that among them are recruited most of the magicians, healers, fortune-tellers, “fetish-makers,” etc. They are treated with favor, because of their admitted skill in the things of the spirit as in those of matter: also it is to them that one has recourse in negotiating marriages or

treaties of peace and for assisting the princes in the capacity of ministers.

The number and the divisions of castes vary according to the peoples and regions. The artists—whom we call “griots”—are divided into several castes variously appreciated or scorned, from that of the annalists, who preserve in their memory and transmit to their descendants the great facts about kings and the genealogy of the noble families, or the traditionalists, who know by heart the customs having the force of law in the country, veritable living dictionaries of history or of law, down to the fine speakers, who shamelessly chant the praises of any one who shows himself generous toward them and grossly insult such personages who are more disposed to pay them to keep silent than to speak, in passing by the multiple castes of bards, *trouvères*, singers, story-tellers, mountebanks, mimes, special dancers, musicians, etc. As for the artisans, they constitute three large distinct castes: (1) that of the workers in metal, stone, and clay, called “smiths,” in which the men make charcoal, extract iron from ore by the method called catalonian and transform it into arms and tools, manufacture objects and rings of copper or bronze, jewelry of gold or silver, statues and ornaments or utensils of stone or clay, while the women make pottery; (2) that of the workers in wood, builders and repairers of canoes, menders of calabashes, carpenters, sculptors of wood, basket-makers, etc.; finally, (3) the caste of the workers on leather, called “shoemakers,” who tan skins and make it up into cases, sacks, sheaths,

saddles, harnesses, footwear. Often each of these three castes is subdivided into several secondary castes, more narrowly specialized.

### *Slavery*

Slavery has doubtless existed at all times among the Negroes, although it has been especially developed at the instigation of foreigners: formerly by the inhabitants of North Africa and nearer Asia, and at a more recent epoch by European and American slave traders. To-day it has been abolished by the colonizing nations, who have ended by destroying that which they worshiped; it is still more effectively abolished by the fact of the disappearance of slave-hunting conquerors and by the cessation of inter-tribal wars: because, outside of a few miserable groups among whom parents sometimes sold their own children in order to procure food for themselves, there have never been other slaves in Negro Africa than the persons captured in war. These became the property of their captors, who could keep them for themselves or sell them.

In law, slaves were indeed but cattle. In fact, with the exception of those who were destined for the slave traders and who constituted a veritable merchandise, they were treated by their master as almost on the same footing as the members of his family, often becoming his trusted associates and sometimes being freed by him on his own initiative.

As for the children born of slaves, they could not be sold and they made up an integral and inalienable part of the family property, and it was the same with

their descendants in perpetuity. These descendants of slaves have become, similar to agrarian serfs who, often much more numerous than their lords, constitute to-day what one might call the lower classes, while the persons in a position to prove that their ancestors have always been free are for the most part a minority and form the nobility.

### *Age Classes*

Among all the African Negro peoples of animist religion and even among many Islamized populations, the entry of a child into society is dependent upon the accomplishment of certain rites, the details of which vary according to the peoples, but present everywhere, at bottom, the same essential character, comprising a series of graduated steps, analogous to those which terminate among Christian peoples by baptism, first communion and confirmation. In Negro Africa the three successive steps are marked by the imposition of a name, mutilation and final initiation.

The imposition of a name generally takes place at the end of the first week following the day of birth. Generally it does not give place to any solemn ceremony and includes, simply the proclamation, by the chief of the family or one of his representatives, of the name which the child will officially bear. This name is not necessarily the one to be ordinarily used. In fact, at the termination of delivery, the mother gives the child a name, which is suggested, in general, either by his rank in birth or by the day on which he entered the world. The father may pro-

pose another, which is frequently that of a deceased relative whom one wishes, in a way, to revive in the new-born, or else that of a notable personage, living or dead, whom one wishes to honor. It is often the name given by the mother which becomes the official name among the families counting descent from the mother, and the name chosen by the father in the families counting descent in the masculine line. But when the official name happens to be already that of the mother or father, an uncle or an aunt, a brother or a sister, it is the habit to substitute for it a term considered as synonymous, or else an expression which signifies "homonym of the father, homonym of the mother, etc.," or again a surname taken from the exterior aspect of the child, his complexion or any other circumstance, or finally, the name chosen by the one of the two authors who was not unqualified to enforce his choice. Frequently, also, this substitution takes place because a fortune-teller has predicted that misfortune will fall on the child if he is called by his official name and then the name substituted is often that of a deity whose protection one desires to assure for the child.

Sometimes, the imposition of the name is accompanied by scarifications made on the face of the child and intended to mark, after a fashion, his nationality. But, aside from the fact that these ethnic scarifications are not practiced among all African Negro peoples, they are often deferred, among the peoples who do practice them, to a later age, and then one is content, at the moment of the imposition of a name, with an exterior and temporary mark, such as a ring

of leather or fibers tied to one leg, an object attached to the neck by a string, etc.

At the time when the child begins to reason, the father, if it has to do with a boy, takes him to the fields or to his work and teaches him the rudiments of the trade that he is to exercise later; the mother, in the case of a girl, initiates her into the household cares and feminine tasks.

At the approach of the age of puberty, the children of each sex of the same village—or of the same district in large centers—get the habit of playing together and elect among themselves a chief of games, often assisted by an associate chief and a herald, the latter charged with convoking the players and repeating to them the rules of the game; this is the first manifestation of the “age class”: those who are to form a sort of association of comrades for all the rest of their lives, boys on one side, girls on the other, learning to know each other and practicing, at the same time that they are amusing themselves, to observe the discipline and the solidarity necessary to the proper functioning of all associations.

This preparatory period terminates with the appearance of puberty, about the age of ten or twelve years, by a retreat, to which boys and girls are separately subjected, into the woods in the neighborhood of the village. This retreat includes tests intended to harden the children against fear and suffering, and instruction regarding religious beliefs, family and social duties, the conjugal and paternal or maternal rôle which they will have to play as

future men and women. The exercises of the retreat last in general one week, at the expiration of which one proceeds with the accomplishment of the rite marking the passage from childhood to youth and the entry of the adolescent into society. This rite consists essentially in a mutilation, which is often circumcision for the boys and still more often excision of the clitoris for the girls, but it may take on many other forms, for example, incisions made on the forehead or on the nape of the neck or elsewhere, or even the extraction of one or two incisors, or else the filing of certain teeth to a point, or even the removal of the terminal phalange of one of the toes, etc. Each people possesses its own tradition in this regard. Often the ceremony of mutilation is accompanied by the imposition of a new name, intended to replace from now on the name received at birth.

Those who, before the mutilation, had formed a sort of childhood association, continue afterwards to constitute the same "age class"; but the nature of their preoccupations is modified and, instead of thinking only about play, they chat about love affairs, practice wrestling and guess riddles.

If the collective education of the girls is generally not pushed beyond the instruction which precedes mutilation, the boys are not at the end of their efforts. With a view to preparing them for their final initiation which will associate them fully with the life of the adults, there is imposed upon them each year, at the time when the dry season interrupts the work of the fields, a retreat from four to



seven weeks in the woods or an out-of-the-way place, during which they are put to harder and harder tests and a more and more extensive education. The latter, for the most part, has to do with religious legends, historical traditions and the customary laws of the country. Often, they are taught to use an artificial language which is special for each "age class" and which they use among themselves when they do not want to be understood by the classes that are younger or older. Each year, at the end of the period of tests and instruction, they mount one step in the ladder of initiation and when the cycle of their studies is terminated, about the age of 15 or 18 years, they receive in the course of a particular ceremony, permission to conduct themselves as grown-up men. Definitively initiated into the social life of the group, they now make part of it on the same basis as the generation of adults and old men.

Each "age class" has thus played, lived and studied together during six to nine continuous years. The tests experienced in common, the fact of having undergone the same instruction, of using among themselves the same special language not understood by others, all this can only strengthen the bonds which similarity of age renders even more natural. Also, the association formed from childhood, and strengthened by the education received in the course of adolescence, has deep and lasting roots. It continues to function, each member giving to the others the assistance which they ask and all sustaining each other on every occasion. It is to be noted that

social distinctions are virtually abolished within each "age class," the proletarians finding themselves on a plane of equality with the nobles, the people of caste with the non-caste people, at least so far as the common interests of the association are concerned.

There are, naturally, in each locality, as many "age classes" of each sex as there are generations, or nearly so. Class spirit leads to an emulation which translates itself in various manners. If by chance, a certain generation have more well-organized brains, or more eloquent orators than the others, it is their advice which prevails over the others when a decision is taken by the whole group. This curious institution contributes to develop among the Negroes at the same time a spirit of solidarity and a combative temperament; it gives to the life of African Negro societies an intensity and an interest generally unsuspected by Europeans.

Often, it is true, during discussions between "age classes," it is the unreflecting impetuosity of the young which prevails over the experienced wisdom of the elders, because each "class" thins out in the measure that it advances in age and the young "classes" easily hold the power which numbers give.

#### CHAPTER XI

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

See bibliography of Chapter X.

## CHAPTER XII

### RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

ISLAMISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ANIMISM—INDIVIDUAL SPIRITS OF PEOPLE AND THINGS—VITAL BREATH—ANCESTRAL AND NATURAL DIVINITIES—FAMILY CHARACTER OF AFRICAN-NEGRO RELIGION—PRIESTS—WORSHIP—GENERALIZED WORSHIP AND SPECIALIZED DIVINITIES — BELIEF IN A SUPREME GOD—MAGIC AND MAGICIANS—FUNERALS—MISCELLANEOUS BELIEFS

#### *Islamism, Christianity and Animism*

In general, a very exaggerated rôle is accorded to Islamism regarding the extent and importance of its domain in Negro Africa. It has hardly penetrated in a profound and effectual fashion except among the Negro and Negroid populations who live on the border of the Sahara; its adepts become more and more rare in proportion as one advances toward the south and, even in the region which we commonly call the Sudan, it is far from being the numerically dominant religion. It may be said that the only African peoples who are in the majority Mussulmans, aside from the populations of the white race in Egypt, Berbery and the Sahara, are the Wolofs—who are, moreover, with the exception of the Lebu of Dakar, of recent Islamization—the Tukulors, the Fulani of the Futa-Jallon, the Sarakolle, the Jula, the Songhoy, the Kanuri of Bornu, the Kanembu, the Teda of the Kavar, Tibesti and Borku, some of the tribes of the Wadai, of the Darfur and of the

Kordofan, the Bishari, the Danakil, the Somali and certain collectivities on the islands and the coasts of Zanzibar forming a very small total population. The other Fulani, the Mandingo, Susu, Yoruba, Hausa, Bagirmians are partly Mussulmans and partly pagans. Portions of the Galla people and other Negroid populations of Abyssinia or its vicinity are Christians, others are pagans, some few others are Mussulmans.

All the rest, that is to say, the immense majority of the Negro population of Africa, is pagan, if one excepts some hundreds of thousands of Christians dispersed here and there in the proximity of Catholic and Protestant missions, notably on the coast of Senegal, at Sierra-Leone, in Liberia, on the Gold Coast, in Dahomey, at Lagos, at Duala and Yaunde in the Cameroons, at Libreville, in Angola, in the territories of the Union of South Africa, in Mozambique and in the Uganda. It seems that there is not a single Negro people who have been converted *en bloc* to Christianity.

It must be added that, on the whole, the Mussulman Negroes and the Christian Negroes remain faithful in good numbers to their ancestral beliefs and to many rites of their ancient paganism.

Of what does this paganism or so-called paganism consist? Since it is the religion of almost all the Negroes, it merits more interest than seems to have been brought to it up to the present. It is generally characterized as "fetishism," but fetishism, that is, the belief in the power of fetishes or talismans is not a religion; it is only one of the most apparent

aspects of universal superstition. Fetishism is met with in all religions, even the most advanced and most disengaged from material things, and the Christian Negroes like the Mussulman Negroes are as fetishistic as the pagan Negroes: only they have a greater number of "fetishes," for they have kept those of paganism and have added to them those that they found in a number of practices, to be sure not very canonical, of Christianity and Islamism.

One may say that mysticism and collectivism are at the base of all the group activities of the African Negroes and that they dominate the character of Negro civilization. Doubtless there are individuals who have succeeded in freeing themselves, in part at least, from the general mysticism; but, whatever be their number, they represent only isolated forces, whose influence remains almost inoperative on the mass, precisely because of the slight importance that the individual occupies in African Negro society. Everything in their institutions seems to be established with a view to the collectivity only; nothing has been arranged in the interest of the individual in the case where this interest does not ostensibly merge with that of the group.

What is more, no institution exists, whether in the social or political domain, or even with regard to matters of economics, which does not rest on a religious concept or which has not religion for its corner-stone. These peoples, of whom it is sometimes denied that they have any religion at all, are in reality among the most religious in the world.

Very often preoccupations of a divine order outweigh among them those of a purely human order.

This situation is amplified and strengthened by the fact that the divinity is not, for the Negroes, something far-off, extraordinary or difficult of approach, but on the contrary, it is, in a way, an integral part of society itself or of the environment in which the society lives. Their gods are familiar beings whose presence is revealed at every instant, apart from whom it is materially impossible to exist, and whose immediate and constant influence is exercised over all their daily acts and directs the orientation of all their concepts.

Certainly, the African Negroes all believe in the power of fetishes, that is, in the power of objects manufactured by man and reputed, because of the special character of the rites which presided at their making or at their consecration, to be endowed with magical power; but this belief, common in various degrees to all humanity; does not translate the specific character of their religion, any more than the belief in the power of amulets made by the marabout is Islamism or the belief in the power of medals which have been blessed is Christianity.

If the religion of the African Negroes is not fetishism neither is it "totemism." As far as we are able to know exactly what totemism is, such as it has been described by observers of American civilizations, it seems that it consists in attributing to each family or clan an animal origin, considering the animal species from whom the human group descends as the protector and the emblem of this

group, giving to the group the name of the species in question and the worship of this species.

Hasty enquiries have led to the belief in the existence of a system of this kind among several African Negro tribes, but a more conscientious and thorough study shows that, if one frequently meets in Negro Africa species of animals—and all sorts of other entities too—which are sacred for given human collectivities who are far from always being families or clans, if there appears to be a more or less vague notion of lines of relationship, or more exactly of alliance, between these species or entities and these collectivities, the former are never the object of a religious cult for the latter. In truth we may cite examples of animals which are the object of a veritable worship, as the sacred serpents of Widah in Dahomey, the crocodiles of the Niger at Bamako, etc.; but it must be pointed out that these animals are in no way considered as having an ancestor in common with the faithful who address prayers to them and offer them sacrifices, but that they are simply incarnations or symbols of regional deities.

Some have wished to see in the religion of the Negroes a sort of "theism." Surely the majority of the African Negroes believe in the existence of a Creator-God, but it is for them a conception of a philosophical or cosmological order much more than of a religious one. At any rate, this Creator-God does not play, in their eyes, the rôle of Providence and, if his name is sometimes invoked in formulating wishes, he is never worshiped. We are not sure,

moreover, that the custom of invoking the name of God is not an importation, more or less direct, from Islamism or, in certain regions, from Christianity. Also, it is well to state that, where this custom holds sway, the name given to God is that of the Sky or of Rain, one of the principal local divinities.

This deification of the sky as a generator of fecundating rain, that of the earth as a fertilized substance producing life, that of many rivers, mountains, various geographical peculiarities, the existence of numerous seasonal festivities imprinted with an undeniable religious character, suggest a dynamism or naturalism, a religion of the forces and elements of nature, an agrarian cult. Indeed, there is something of this in the beliefs and the religious activities of the Negroes of Africa; but it is not only this, for one observes, on the other hand, that they worship the dead.

These two faces of African Negro religion are not always distinct from one another and often, in their rites and formulæ, we observe a confusion, which appears sometimes desired, between the tellurian divinity and the ancestral divinity. This confusion should give us the key to the exact nature of the religious concepts of the Negroes and justifies the name of "animism" that is generally given to them to-day.

This term appears suitable if we mean by it, the belief in the existence of souls of the same essence in all beings, those which are inanimate in appearance as well as those which are animate, the dead and the living; a belief in the personal character of



each one of these souls or spirits, and in the exterior force of each one among them who has not to direct the interior life of its material envelope, that is to say, in the power of the souls of nature and of the dead, which thus become the object of worship.

*Individual Spirits of People and Things*

The religion of the Negroes of Africa is in reality *animism*, that is, the belief in the all-powerfulness of spirits, to whom the faithful render a consistent cult of prayers, offerings and sacrifices, with a view to attracting their favors, deterring their anger or calling for help against enemies.

What are these spirits? It is not the spirit of good and the spirit of evil; there are not good spirits and bad spirits. The animism of the Negroes has nothing of dualism and that which has led several missionaries to present it under this aspect can be only a subjective reminiscence of the opposition made by certain Christians between God and the Devil.

The Negroes believe, indeed, that every distinct being—animal, vegetable or mineral—and every natural phenomenon is endowed, aside from the material of which it is constituted or the manifestations which make it perceptible to the senses, with an apparently immaterial principle, possessing a personality of its own, a thought, a will. It is this principle that I call "spirit" for want of a word in our own language, too far removed from the primitive epoch to render correctly a concept that

our distant ancestors doubtlessly possessed but which we no longer have. In each of the native dialects of Negro Africa, a word exists to designate this principle or this force. In the Mandingo language, for example, this word is *nia*, which exactly signifies "personal life."<sup>1</sup>

Every person has his *nia*, born at the same time as his body is formed in the womb of his mother, but which will continue to live after the decomposition of the body, preserving the same moral temperament that it had during the lifetime of that person and constituting the personality of the latter. Every animal, also, has its *nia*, which partakes of the same kind of personality and immortality. It is the same for every plant, the *nia* of which is manifested as soon as the plant begins to germinate and continues to exist even after its death. The same is equally true of every stone, of every mountain, of every spring, of every peculiarity of nature, but with the difference that, in these cases, the substance may be as eternal as its *nia*.

The earth, the water, the atmosphere are also endowed with *nia*, but considered only in their local manifestations and not in their generality. There are as many terrestrial *nias*, each one distinct from the others, and each one possessing its own personality, as there are parcels of ground held by distinct tenants or those enjoying rights to its use: each field, each savanna, each forest has its particular *nia*. There is not a *nia* of water, nor even a *nia* of a stream of water as a hole, but as many

<sup>1</sup> [See Preface, p. xv, ff.]

*nias* as there exist pools, biefs or branches or even, if it has to do with an important river or stream, of the portions appropriated by riparian groups. Perhaps there is a collective *nia* of the sky or of the air, which is the supreme God that is sometimes invoked, but there is also and especially a *nia* for each part of the sky which sends forth rain on a given portion of ground, for each wind that blows in a given direction over a given place.

### *Vital Breath*

As for living things—men, animals and plants—the Negroes attribute to them, besides the *nia* or the soul, another principle of an altogether different nature, a sort of vital breath, an impersonal fluid without thought or will, without an independent force, but whose presence is necessary in order that the body should manifest life. This principle is what the Mandingo call *dia*, a word which, in the current language, signifies “gentleness, pleasantness, ease, pleasure” and represents essentially the state of that which is without asperities or the quality of that which has the ability to make asperities disappear, literally and figuratively.

It is, in a way, the intermediary between the *nia*, which commands and directs the movements of the material life and the body which executes these movements. It is—if one may be permitted a comparison which is only approximate—the electric current which serves to put the machine in action, the *nia* being the intelligent switch which opens and shuts off the current. The entrance, into a body

at birth, of a portion of this impersonal and universal fluid determines visible life; its separation from the body determines material death.

The *nia* of a defunct is a power with which the living are obliged to count, a power that is all the more profitable or redoubtable in proportion as it is liberated from all corporeal preoccupations: this is what explains the worship of the souls of the dead; it also explains why these souls are the object of a cult which is the more fervent in proportion as the decomposition of the body is the more remote; in the African Negro pantheon, the souls of the earliest ancestors occupy a place notably more elevated than those of the recent dead.

For the same motive, the *nia* of a parcel of ground, not having to busy itself with vivifying a being which does not move, which has no *dia* and which, contrary to animals and plants, is subject neither to death nor to the vicissitudes of life, enjoys an exterior force and an independence comparable only to those of the *nias* of the most distant ancestors and occupies, at the side of these, a privileged position in the scale of divinities.

In other words, the African Negroes believe that every animated being encloses within itself, in addition to its body, two immaterial principles. One, a sort of breath or vital fluid, has no other rôle than to animate the material part and to communicate life and movement to it; it is a principle without an individuality or personality of its own, which is eternal in the sense that it is anterior to the body

that it animates for the time being and will survive it to go and animate another, and so on until the end of time. Like matter, it is infinitely divisible and can dissociate itself into various elements each of which suffices, alone or combined with another element coming from elsewhere, to animate a given body. When a man dies, it is that the vital breath has abandoned its carnal envelope in order immediately to create a new life either in a human or animal foetus in gestation or in a germinating plant. Of course, this sort of fluid, without personality, without intelligence, without will, that may be compared to an electric current, is not the object of any cult. It is, if you will, a spirit, but only in the etymological sense of the word (*spiritus* "breath").

The second principle is very different: born with the body which harbors it and at the same time, it constitutes the veritable personality of the being to whom it communicates its thought, its will and the force to act; the vital breath permits the members of a man or an animal to move, it permits the sap of a tree to circulate in its veins, but this movement and this circulation cannot be accomplished if they are not ordered by the spirit. If it happens that one day the control of the vital breath escapes from the spirit and that, as a consequence, this breath leaves its envelope and death follows, it is because another spirit which is stronger has neutralized the first: that is why all death is attributed by the Negroes not to material causes, which for them are only secondary and immediate causes, but to the

psychic influence of an evil-minded spirit, the only real and first cause of death.

After the decease of a being, only his spirit lives, and it lives such as it was during the lifetime of this being with the same personality, the same character, the same affections and the same hatreds. Only it no longer has the vital breath to command nor the carnal envelope limiting its fancy and so it becomes even more powerful, being no longer hampered in its action by the necessity for directing the life of the body and for guiding itself, in a way, by the vital breath. Also, it is then deified, and it is here that we must find the origin of the cult of the dead, or of the manes of ancestors.

If every animate being—man, animal or plant—possesses the two principles of which we have just spoken, inanimate beings—the defunct, dead animals or plants, solid minerals, liquids or gases—are naturally deprived of the vital breath, which has no importance whatever from the religious point of view, but each one is endowed with an individual spirit, intelligent and active, all the more efficient and redoubtable, as I have just said, because it does not have to occupy itself with the inert body which is only its material representation and to which it is not bound by the obligation to control the play of the absent vital breath. This body, moreover, can disintegrate, as is the case with corpses, and the spirit is not held to make of it, its constant dwelling place.

Whether it is the spirit of a deceased person or of a mountain, a block of stone, a gulf, a river, the

heavens, the rain, the wind, the land and especially a particular piece of land, the parcel of ground one inhabits and from which one gains a living, for the Negroes it is always the same kind of spirit, it is always a principle that is invisible but which sees everything, which takes account of all, is sensitive, can be offended unintentionally, equally irascible and capable of causing hard expiation for even involuntary offenses that have been done to it, but feeble and vain as man who created it in his own image, letting itself be moved and cajoled by prayers and offerings or influenced by propitiatory sacrifices.

Such is the foundation of the animist religion current among the Negroes from the Sahara to the Cape of Good Hope. It includes in the same cult innumerable spirits of ancestors of man and not less innumerable spirits of the phenomena of nature, all promoted to the ranks of divinities.

#### *Ancestral and Natural Divinities*

Granting all this, it is easy to perceive what are the principal gods in the religion of the Negroes: they are the souls of the dead, especially of those who have been dead the longest, and the souls of the peculiarities or phenomena of nature, the one and the other forming, in the mind of the faithful, only one category, presenting exactly the same characteristics, possessing the same faculties and having the right to the same worship.

In principle, every person, every animal, every plant can be deified after its death for all eternity

and the same is true of every mineral, every peculiarity or phenomena of nature: we are dealing with an animism that is integral. In practice, however, only the souls of beings who in their lifetime asserted their personality, and those of the elements which have revealed their power in a particularly striking fashion are deified. On the other hand, as I have said above, no fundamental distinction is established between human souls and others, and it happens that, in the course of time, the *nia* of the most distant ancestor, in the thought of the natives and in the representations which they make of it, is confounded with the soul of the ground acquired by this ancestor. Neither do they make the distinction, dear to the religions with dualist tendencies, between gods and devils, between good and bad spirits: no divinity is considered as essentially good or bad in itself and there do not exist souls of whom one seeks only to attract the favor and others of whom one seeks only to avoid the wrath; the faithful demand of the same divinity aid for themselves and harm for their enemies.

*Family Character of African-Negro Religion*

Or the other hand, one must not lose sight of the collectivist and patriarchal character of African Negro societies, where each group coming from the same line constitutes a cell at once indivisible and impermeable, at least in principle. It is not just any man whose soul will be deified after his death, but only the man who, in his lifetime, belonged to the cellule: the worship of the dead, then, becomes the



worship of ancestors. It is for the same reason that the worship of the earth is not addressed to the terrestrial earth, but to the portion of the ground acquired by the founder of the cell and transmitted by him to his descendants. Thus, the animism of the Negroes appears as strictly a family matter, at least in its general manifestations; religion is localized in the family, in the large sense of the word; the gods, whether or not they be of human essence, are members of the family, and the divinities of one family have no part in the worship of the members of another family.

Quite naturally, the priest of this family religion is the patriarch of the family, that is, the most ancient of the living descendants of the initial ancestor, who is also the first of the gods in the family pantheon, conjointly with the soul of the earth where he formerly founded the family. This patriarch-priest does not need to receive a sacerdotal education or be especially invested with the religious function which he exercises: he holds this by right of succession from the fact that he is the natural substitute and the descendant of the deified ancestor, whose prerogative he has inherited at the same time as the forms and rites invented by this ancestor when he took possession of the family ground, waters and atmosphere; he is the only one who can enter into communication with the souls of the dead who have preceded him in this life and with the souls of the natural forces in whose being has been developed the cellule of which he is the chief. Besides, is he not himself on the eve of pass-

ing in his turn to the ranks of divinity, the next day, when he happens to die, transmitting his priesthood and his responsibilities to the eldest of the survivors?

Thus it is the patriarch who, in each family, constitutes the obligatory intermediary between the group of the worshipers and the family divinities, souls of ancestors and souls of nature. It is he who proceeds, in the name of all and in the common interest, with the ceremonies of this worship.

### *Priests*

All divinities have their priests who are the patriarchs for the cult of the ancestors, the "masters of the ground" for the cult of the land and the waters, and a particular clergy, initiated in a sort of school into the more or less secret rites of certain more specialized cults. There are also temples which are sometimes huts where are preserved the remains or bones of the dead, or else objects consecrated to the cult of special divinities, very often trees or pieces of wood, frequently rocks of bizarre form or grottos of a mysterious aspect. They have their altars, which may be a sort of bench of dried clay, a wooden post or a clay cone supporting a vase of offerings, the stump of a tree, a turned-over urn, a stone plate, a copper basin placed on a kind of pyramid, etc. They have their materials of worship, statuettes representing the deceased, divers objects having belonged to them, baskets filled with bones, libation vases, knives for sacrifices, little bells or rattles intended to invoke the spirit or to convoke

the worshipers, sacred tambourines and above all wooden masks which take the form of monstrous animal heads and which are worn by the officiating priests during certain ceremonies when they are felt to incarnate the divinity itself.

### *Worship*

In general, however, there is offered to the spirits the blood of victims, which are chickens, dogs, goats, sheep and which formerly were often human beings.<sup>1</sup> The altar, as well as the objects consecrated to the cult, is sprinkled with this blood and then the feathers or hairs of the victim are spread over it, sticking to the blood. In the modest current sacrifices, the victim is replaced by an egg, the contents of which plays the part of the blood and the shell that of the feathers and hairs.

In order better to understand in what this worship consists and in what manner it is conceived, I must once more have recourse to a native term which, for convenience I will borrow as before, from the Mandingo language. In this idiom, the word *lâ-siri* (or *dâ-siri* and *lâ-siti* according to the dialects) is given to what we express by one of the words "worship" or "religion." This term signifies "dispositions taken (*lâ*) in view of binding (*siri*)."<sup>2</sup> It appears from this that, for the Negroes, as for us, religion consists of "binding" the divinity

<sup>1</sup> Human sacrifices were practiced currently at Ghana in the eleventh century, as Bekri testifies. We found them in various degrees of vigor, almost everywhere, at the moment of taking possession of the Negro countries. They have not yet completely disappeared in our days.

[the French word is "*lier*"], of constraining it, by appropriate rites, to accord what is expected of it and to keep away what is feared, and that worship is the whole of the dispositions taken in view of thus binding the deity, that is to say, the whole of the rites (invocations, sacrifices, offerings, prayers) necessary for obtaining the sought-for result.

Of course, these rites vary according to the divinity to whom they are addressed, according to the object that one proposes to obtain and also according to the mentality and the degree of civilization of the given population. The forms of invocation are not the same for the earth as for the sky; the victim sacrificed may be, on great occasions, a member of the family, for example, a child of the patriarch or the first-born of his daughter, or even a slave, preferably a young girl still virgin, or it may be a heifer, an ewe, a goat, a dog or simply a chicken, or the male of one of these species, or even, in matters of daily concern, an egg; the offerings are generally a part of the flesh of the victim or only its blood, or only the hairs or the feathers, or again the contents of the egg and the débris of the shell; they may also consist in libations of palm wine, of millet beer or of some other fermented drink.

The Negroes of Africa cannot, certainly, escape the almost universal law which leads man to materialize the divinities which he creates for himself. Without doubt their animism rests, by definition, on a spiritual basis. But it is very difficult for the faithful not to seek to represent, in a more or less symbolic fashion, the mysterious forces with which

they feel themselves in daily contact, especially when there is nothing to concretize them naturally. It is rarely that the earth, the sky, a river, a mountain have given place to the manufacture of idols, because these are divinities which manifest themselves to the senses in a tangible manner; however, one frequently sees their power symbolized by some being or object which is to the divinity itself what, for example, the cow Apis is to Osiris or the Cross is to Christ and which, in the thought of the faithful, participates in a certain measure in the sacred and divine character of the immaterial power which it evokes or symbolizes: thus, such an animal will be considered as an emanation of the forest or of the river that it inhabits, such a tree or such a stone as that of the field or of the savanna which harbors it, such a grotto as offering the preferred asylum for the spirit of the mountain; usually it is to this, that what we call, inexactly enough, the worship of animals, of trees, of stones or of grottos reduces itself.

All the more reason why the animist Negroes should feel the need of giving a visible representation to the deified souls of their ancestors or, if you prefer, to make statues of their saints. It is this need that has given rise to the manufacture of those innumerable statuettes and statues in wood or clay, sometimes of stone or metal, that European connoisseurs collect under the name of "fetishes," which are no other than the images of the dead and which one sprinkles with the blood of sacrificed victims. Often, also, it is an object having belonged

to an ancestor, notably his stool, which fulfills the function of an idol. At other times, we are in the presence of veritable relics, such as bones enclosed in a basket.

These various representations of the divinity are called *boli* by the Mandingo, who clearly distinguish them from the *nia* that they are intended to symbolize or materialize. Just the same as we give the name of the saint even to the statue of a saint, it happens that they confound in their terminology as also, very probably, in their conceptions, the *nia* and its *boli*, the god and the idol.

*Generalized Worship and Specialized Divinities*

I have said that the religion of the Negroes is in general a family matter and that each family has its own divinities, with its patriarch for priest. However, it has happened that some one deified ancestor, by virtue of the miracles that have been attributed to his intervention, has seen his reputation pass beyond the family sphere and his worship generalized, at the same time that the object of this worship becomes specialized in conformity with the traditions that have been established and which represented such a divinity as being particularly qualified for protection against pox, such another for discovering individuals endowed with the evil eye, etc. . . . In the same way, a particular mountain or waterfall, whose worship was at first localized in the interior of the group on the territory in which it is situated, has acquired, in the course of events, an extensive renown as possessing the power to keep away thun-

der or to procure fine harvests, and its worship has spread afar.

Thus there have been developed, sometimes from one end of Negro Africa to another, special cults whose origin probably goes back to some vestige of an ancient family religion, but which, at the present hour, and often already for centuries, have become veritable national and international cults. The populations professing them have no notion, in general, of the place where they arose or of the original personality of the divinity whom they reverence to-day.

For these cults, at the same time generalized in their geographical field and specialized as to their object, a special clergy with special rites was needed. If the patriarch is qualified for speaking to the gods of his family and of his grounds, he is not so for addressing the divinities of foreign origin. If the rites established by the ancestor suffice for "binding" this ancestor and the souls of his domain, they become inoperative with regard to divinities who are not accustomed to these rites. That is why each of these cults, common to a great number of families and even of peoples, possesses a particular clergy with special training for the particular cult and prepared for its mission by a more or less extensive and a more or less secret initiation, comprising lessons, tests, the successive acquirement of various ranks, the employment of an artificial language reserved for the use of the initiated and for ritual ceremonies. These ceremonies are distinguished from the ceremonies of patriarchal animism by a

more complicated and more mysterious exterior, by temples or places especially devoted to the cult, in particular, sacred woods, by strange songs, dances and music, by demonstrations meant to impress the masses or to frighten the uninitiated, by the use of grotesque or terrifying masks, with which those who are felt to personify the deity rig themselves out, and curious processes used for reproducing what is said to be the voice of this deity.

Europeans usually give the name of "secret societies" to the religious fraternities which are formed with the aim of constituting a clergy for these special cults and for proceeding with the ceremonies which characterize them. Although exact regarding certain of these fraternities, this appellation is not so for others, whose practices are public and known to everybody, even the uninitiated.

*Belief in a Supreme God*

The question is not completely solved as to whether the Negroes of Africa, aside from all Christian and Mussulman influence, believe in a Supreme Being, in a unique God. It seems indeed that this belief is almost universal among them, but it is of a cosmological order rather than a religious one, as above mentioned.<sup>1</sup> They admit that the world and the beings it encloses, including the spirits, have been created by a Superior Being whose existence they recognize, but in whom they have no interest because they would not know how to enter into relations with him and because he himself has no interest in the

<sup>1</sup> P. 218.



lot of his creatures, having nothing of the character of the Providence-God of the western religions. So the Supreme Being is never the object of any sort of cult among the African animists, at least if he is not identified with the Sky, a generating divinity who fecundates the soil by means of rain, or else identified with the Earth, a fecundated and productive divinity.

I have several times heard the pagan Negroes designate the Mussulmans by an expression literally signifying "those who invoke God." The fact that men can address themselves to God appears to them surprising and contributes not a little to the prestige which the Mohammedans enjoy among them.

### *Magic and Magicians*

As I have said above, superstition reigns among the Negroes as among all men, but more supremely, of course, among ignorant peoples, who are impressed to the highest degree by mystery, than among populations that a more practical type of mentality, a more generalized education and a more abstract religion have disembarrassed in part from this plague of humanity. Belief, as naïve as ineradicable, in the power of amulets and talismans is legendary among the Negroes. There is not one of them, whatever be his religion, who does not wear on his body several "gris-gris," of which one is to preserve him from such and such a malady, a second from the evil eye, a third from the spirit irritated by his ancestor who was left without burial, while another should procure for him the love of the

woman he desires, or the generosity of the master whom he serves or even, if he is an official, a rapid advancement. But here we have manifestations of an essentially human credulity and we can see almost the same things among ourselves.

The manufacturers of amulets, the magicians and sorcerers have easy prey in such an environment. Numerous fortune-tellers predict the future and reveal hidden things, by means of processes, many of which strangely resemble those which our own clairvoyants employ. The magical spell, in divers forms, is practiced on a great scale. Some people are considered to have received at birth the power to kill or make sick at a distance, thanks to the evil spell which they cast, sometimes unconsciously, over their enemies or over unknown persons. These casters-of-spells are naturally very much feared; special divinities, whose cult is made up of strange rites, mysterious and complicated, have been invented and secret societies have been created with a view to discovering these sorcerers, to annihilate or at least to counterbalance their power and, if need be, put them to death.

The family religion, as we have seen, has been instituted and functions only for the profit of the group. It does not bother about individual interests, and the patriarch, sole possible intermediary between the deity and the mass of the faithful, only intervenes when the common fate of the latter is concerned. It would especially not be proper to have recourse to it when one desires to obtain the disappearance of a member of the family. As for the

special cults of which we have just spoken, they each have a well-defined object and one could not, for example, address himself to the god of thunder or to a god destined to combat the casters-of-spells when one has to solicit the cure for cancer or to preserve oneself from poisoned arrows. Here then magic intervenes, and it has taken an intense development among the Negroes, being substituted for religion each time that the latter is in default, that is to say, usually when it is not the interest of the collectivity that is concerned.

Magic has, in a certain measure, the same initial aim as religion, since, in a similar way, it proposes to obtain, by the intervention of occult powers of which one becomes the master, that which man, reduced to his own forces, could not procure for himself. But it differs from religion by the means that it employs for realizing its object. It is especially distinguished from the latter by the nature and extent of the interests that it is called upon to serve, as well as by the character of the persons who hold the monopoly of it. Religion addresses itself, by the intermediary of the chief of the family or of the priests trained in special colleges, to the deities who are, so to say, official, according to venerable and immutable rites consecrated by custom, with a view to procuring the favors of these deities for the collectivity of the faithful taken as a whole. Magic addresses itself, by the intermediary of a particular person who makes himself what he is, to ill-defined powers, generally known only to the magician who has recourse to them and often invented by him ac-

ording to rites that he has created out of his own imagination and which he modifies at will, with a view to procuring what is wished personally and for themselves by individuals who pay him for this purpose.

One might say that magic is an attempt at reaction by the individual instinct against the collectivist character of the African Negro religion.

Magicians, both men and women, swarm in Negro Africa. They have a clientele at least as numerous and as believing as the priests of religions, properly so-called, a clientele composed of the totality of individuals who have to demand for themselves things that they cannot or dare not from the recognized deities. They exercise an enormous influence over that clientele and, in consequence, although the latter is made up of individuals, over the masses that its great number constitutes. It is the inveterate and unshakable confidence of the Negroes in the efficiency of magical practices, and not their true religion, which has been the obstacle to the progress of their mentality and which is the cause, in great part, of the stagnant state of their civilizations.

It would, however, be unjust to render the magicians responsible for this situation, for they share the belief of their congeners in the power of their art and, if they are given to magic, it is assuredly because it is remunerative, but it is equally because they are as credulous as their clients.

Among these numerous magicians, there are all categories. Some are healers or exorcists, others are makers of amulets and talismans, "fetishers"

properly speaking; some practice magical spells or manufacture magical powders intended to kill or make sick those on whom they are projected; many content themselves with predicting the future, discovering hidden secrets or indicating unlucky things and the means of protection against them; a great many add to their so-called occult science a talent, sometimes quite remarkable, for prestidigitation, which contributes to heighten their prestige.

### *Funerals*

Death and funerals give place to ceremonies which vary enormously from tribe to tribe and from region to region, but which everywhere take on an accentuated character of solemnity and religiosity, as is natural among peoples professing ancestor worship. Generally the dead are buried in the ground, either after having been previously enclosed in a coffin of wood, or sewed up in a mat or only enveloped in a shroud; inhumation sometimes takes place in the ground of the house which the defunct inhabited in his lifetime, sometimes in a place reserved for use as a cemetery. Sometimes, the body is abandoned in the woods, when it is supposed that the decease has been caused by an irritated deity.

In general, especially when it has to do with a personage of mark, inhumation does not take place till a fairly long time after death, sometimes several weeks, several months or even several years. In this case the body is previously subjected either to a sort of embalming or to simple desiccation. Also,

very often, the dead is interred only a few days after the decease, but the tomb is not completely closed and an opening is arranged, provisionally covered with a stone or turned-over kettle, in such a way as to be easily displaced for introducing into the tomb the offerings brought by relatives who had not arrived in time for the interment.

Custom, in fact, does not consider the funeral as definitively terminated until all the relatives of the dead have acquitted themselves of this pious duty, and it is only then that the heir can enter into possession of his inheritance.

#### *Miscellaneous Beliefs*

The propensity to see everywhere, as of necessity, the intervention of what is for us the supernatural, has given birth among the Negroes to a mass of beliefs and practices that cannot possibly be characterized as religious, but which are attached in many ways, to the domain of magic.

Such is, notably, the belief, so widespread, in those beings to which the Mandingo give the name of *soûbagha* or *soûbâ*, whom we improperly call "sorcerers" and whom it would be more exact to call "throwers-of-bad-luck." They are the men and women who are considered to be endowed, usually involuntarily and unconsciously, with the faculty of causing the death of people on whom they rest their thought, by "eating their soul," that is to say, under the circumstances, by depriving them of their *dia* or vital spirit, or else of making them insane by substituting their own *nia* for that of their victims.

Considered as public malefactors, all the more dangerous because of their ignorance of their terrible power, these unfortunates are tracked and put to death by the fraternities commonly called "anti-sorcerers," who constitute the clergy of one of the specialized divinities already mentioned. Often it is the corpse of a pretended victim of the *soûbagha* which, carried through the village, will itself designate its so-called murderer. And so great is the belief in all the minds, that this innocent person becomes persuaded of his own culpability and avows the authorship of a crime of which he had not even conceived the idea.

Such again is the belief in "panther-men" or "hyena-men," brothers-german of our ancient werewolves, who can transform themselves at night into wild animals, kill with their claws and devour children and even grown persons, a belief so rooted that it has come to the actual creation of the type of ogre that has been imagined, and persons esteeming themselves destined for this singular task, really commit atrocities of this nature under the protection of ingenious disguises.

Such is also the belief in multiple "taboos" (*tana* or *tènè* in the Mandingo language), some of which fall on the individual, others on the entire collectivity (family, clan, tribe or village), preventing those who are subject to it from destroying, eating, or even touching the animal, plant, or object forbidden. It is difficult to imagine the miserable conditions in which numbers of natives live, embarrassed in all the acts of their existence by the fear

of contravening the taboos which strike them, thus exposing themselves to automatic and often mortal chastisement which, to their minds, every contravention of this order must entail. Such a one among them, for example, cannot eat rice, because it is his individual *tana*, revealed by a fortune-teller at the moment of his birth, or eat mutton, because this animal is the *tana* of his clan, or go out of his house on Monday, because this is the *tana* of the caste to which he belongs, or cultivate ground-nuts in his field, because the portion of the collective ground where his field is situated is stricken with this taboo, etc.

Thus continually exposed to fear the anger of a divinity that he may have neglected to appease by an appropriate sacrifice, the ill-humor of an ancestor to whom he has forgotten to offer the first cup of palm wine gathered in the forest, the malignity of a magician that he has surprised in conversation with one of his creditors, the evil eye of a woman that he vaguely suspects to be *soûbagha*, the tooth of a "panther-man" whom some one has told him is prowling at night in the vicinity of his habitation, the vengeance of a *tana* that he has disobeyed without even knowing it, the African Negro, in spite of the carefreeness that is attributed to him, passes a good part of his life in the fear of the evil which menaces him and against which he has no other recourse than religious or magical practices based on the same credulity that engenders this fear.

Such is, with its serene logic as to principle and its often bloody applications, and also with its de-



grading deformations, the religion to which the Negroes of Africa are profoundly attached.

## CHAPTER XII

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## CHAPTER XIII

### THE MORALITY OF THE NEGROES

#### STANDARDS OF JUDGING THE NEGROES—INDIVIDUAL MORALITY AND GROUP MORALITY

##### *Standards of Judging the Negroes*

"Liars, deceitful, cruel," say those who hate the Negroes; "careless and talkative," say those who profess only a disdainful indulgence toward them. Among these latter critics is to be placed Galen, the Greek physician, cited above. It is something like what is said of children, who are deemed to be without pity and without foresight. It is doubtless such appreciations that have led to the formula: "the Negroes are big children," or perhaps it is the contrary way round. In any case, these appreciations, like the formula itself, proceed from fragmentary and superficial observation, when they do not come directly from preconceived ideas and traditions accepted without examination.

Lying and deceitfulness are not more common among the Negroes than among other human groups. It is certain, at any rate, that cunning is exalted by their popular literature as one of the ruling virtues in the nature of man. But loyalty and self-sacrifice are not less widespread among them and, what is curious, the same Negroes who distinguish themselves by the greatest deceitfulness and ability

in lying are often, on other occasions, models of fidelity and display a frankness reaching naïveté.

I dare not say that an identical phenomenon is not observable among the whites and other human races. I would only like to recall here that, when one wishes to study the average character of one part of humanity, it is necessary to distinguish two cases: one where the portion is considered only as a totality of individuals added one to the other, and the case where it represents an extremely complex amalgam produced by the reaction of these individuals upon each other and the reaction of the group upon each one of its members. In the first case, we obtain the sum of individual mentalities, a thing which can no more be expressed than a sum of heterogeneous objects: if you have observed the character of a thousand individuals, that gives you a total of a thousand mentalities, but you cannot deduce from this an average mentality except by a procedure that all scientific methods condemn. And if you should arrive at an exact average, it would be simply the human average: whether the thousand subjects observed be blacks or whites, Africans or Europeans, this average would probably be the same.

The second case is quite different; it aims at the collective mentality of a people or a race. Now we have seen the importance that the collectivity holds in Negro culture and the quite secondary position given to the individual. This may explain to us why, if the individual mentality of the Negro and his individual morality—the one resulting from the

other—are very little distinguished from the individual mentality and the individual morality of the European, his collective mentality and morality present a quite different aspect from our collective morality and mentality and from his own individual mentality and morality.

*Individual Morality and Group Morality*

There are, in each individual of an African-Negro group, to a much greater degree than in a European crowd, two personalities: a man and an anonymous fragment of the collectivity. The individual is flowing and changing; he has the average virtues and faults of the majority of mankind, or else he is provided with an exceptional virtue or an extreme vice, as is the case with many persons of all races and all countries; furthermore, his virtues and faults vary in intensity according to the influence of the environment in which he finds himself. The fragment of the collectivity undoubtedly preserves the morality of its human individuality, but it submits unconsciously to the domination of the collective individuality which binds it and absorbs it completely. When the individual morality and the collective morality are in concord, the individual under consideration is a single body. But it is rare that this accord exists or at least that it be permanent, for the morality that is proper to the collectivity is not generally what would be proper for the individual. Furthermore, it is not always the same, considering that, if the collectivity seems more stable at first sight than the individual, it has, under the

provocation of circumstances which touch its most direct interests at the moment, changes of humor and caprices that are far more accentuated than those caused in the individual by the passage from childhood to maturity or simply from joy to sorrow.

From this we may imagine the combat that takes place unconsciously in the depths of the Negro who is caught between his individual instincts and the obedience that he owes to the collective will, when this obedience demands the suppression of these instincts. He then acts as the weakest always acts when he feels that he is the weakest: he is crafty or he lies, or else he says nothing and pretends to be stupid.

There must equally be taken into account the superstitious terror in which the Negroes continually live. Whatever act they accomplish, whatever plans they propose, at whatever juncture they find themselves, they ask themselves continually if they are not going contrary to the will of some divinity, or infringing a taboo, violating a tradition established by a distant ancestor and so incurring, from this chief, a punishment all the more redoubtable because it is believed to be automatic and without appeal.

Ask a Negro if there are many inhabitants in his village. His first thought, that of his individual nature, that of a man free from the chains of superstition, would be perhaps to answer you by the exact number of the population, admitting that it were known to him. But he recalls that from his answer may flow either good or evil for the village collec-

tivity: good if your supposed intention is to make a per capita present; evil, as is more probable, if your aim is to tax the village according to its population. It is at this point that the collective morality intervenes to destroy the tendencies of individual morality. The man questioned also thinks that, among the taboos that weigh upon his group, and which are so numerous that no one can know them all, there may be one opposed to the telling of the number of inhabitants or else forbidding that it be given inexactly. To avoid all chance of misfortune, tangible or occult, to his village or to himself, he answers. "I don't know." If he be a Mussu-man, he will get out of it better still by saying: "It is known to God." Or else, taken unawares, having no time to find an easy escape, he may tell you indifferently that there is nobody in his village or that there are so many it is impossible to count them. In the first case you will call him deceitful, in the second a liar or an imbecile; in reality, he is a frightened person because he feels weak in the face of his collectivity, in the face of his superstitions and of you yourself.

The accusation of cruelty, often charged against the Negroes, has no more solid basis than that of deceitfulness. I am aware of the fact that many Negro princes have distinguished themselves by massacres and capital punishment rather than by acts of clemency and pity; but we know of kings of France and of other countries, who nevertheless were great kings, and of chiefs of republics, who nevertheless were great men, who had nothing to

learn in this respect from such and such a Negro king or chief. To take one's examples from such high circles is a poor method of procedure, for this brings in political morality, the most obscure type of all.

If we examine the behavior of the Negroes of the middle classes, we observe that they often look with a dry and cold eye on spectacles of a nature to make one shudder, such as, for example, the putting to death of their fellow-men, though they cannot bear to see a father strike his own child, even for good reasons, without intervening in favor of the victim. These contradictory manifestations have sometimes been related to the well-known fact that the Negroes show themselves almost insensible to great physical pain when their own body is in question but very sensitive, on the contrary, in the face of trivial indispositions. Indeed, these phenomena may perhaps have a cause attributable to the organization or functioning of the nervous system. Perhaps we may also ask, in the case of insensibility, at least apparent insensibility, toward a brutal spectacle, if it is not the collective morality that dominates the individual sentiment; for the latter seems to carry the Negroes toward kindness rather than cruelty while the former leads them to indifference.

Carefreeness, properly speaking, does not seem to be a characteristic of Negro morale. On the contrary, they are very much preoccupied with all that touches the common interest and patriotism, if circumstances happen to create for them the notion that it represents to our minds, will certainly be

highly developed among the Negroes. This will be so much the more so for the reason that the collective self-respect and pride, like individual vanity, are carried to a very high degree among them. The fault with which they have been the most justly reproached is, not indifference nor even improvidence, but lack of persistence in effort. They think about the future, often have very good ideas of what is necessary to be done to prepare themselves for it, begin with enthusiasm the execution of their plans, then they stop and abandon the first tentative, unless they are constrained or pushed by an exterior influence.

It is neither intelligence nor logic that is at fault, it is will, for which is too often substituted simple whimsy.

Here again, however, we must distinguish between the individual and the collectivity. Many Negroes are personally tenacious and even stubborn. It is taken *en masse* that they lack persistence. One may see large numbers of Negro school-children and apprentices who make very satisfactory progress by the force of sustained application to work. In the same way, the majority of the native artisans attract our attention by their patience in pursuing to the end a work once commenced, although the effective progress realized by the masses has been slow, so slow that it resembles at many points the progress accomplished by Sisyphus, who, ceaselessly rolling his stone, always let it fall back to the point of departure.

At any rate, this lack of the collective will may



be counterbalanced by one of its consequences, which is the malleability of the masses. When an exterior will knows how to impose itself on a Negro collectivity and thus make up for what is lacking among them, one easily succeeds in prolonging the initial effort and in inculcating in the masses a sort of habit of perseverance, thanks to which results may be obtained that would otherwise be impossible to hope for. It is thus that the firm discipline of princes like Sundiata and Gongo Mussa in Mali, of Mamadu Touré among the Songhoy, of Samori even in his ephemeral domain, or that of the colonizing nations such as England, Belgium or France, have led entire Negro populations to transform their civilization without, however, deforming it.

## CHAPTER XIV

### ART

NEGRO TALENTS—PORTUGUESE INFLUENCE REFUTED—  
HUMAN FIGURES AND GODS—ANIMAL REPRESENTATIONS  
—INDUSTRIAL ARTS—ARCHITECTURE—MUSIC

#### *Negro Talents*

It is indisputable that the artistic sense is highly developed in the black race. This is a truth that Count Gobineau himself did not hesitate to recognize. Nevertheless this gift does not show to the same degree of perfection in all the arts and, almost everywhere that it is to be seen, it is especially found in the sense of the decorative effect or of the impression produced rather than in the sense of plastic beauty, of gracefulness or of the perfection of the whole composition.

The African Negroes have given us almost nothing in the field of painting or monumental statues. None of the colorings that are to be observed on certain of their walls recall, either by the subject or the execution, anything that could evoke an idea of what we call a picture. The few life-size statues in clay or wood that are sometimes met with in the sacred woods or in the funeral chapels are generally very crude and one would doubt, to look at them, that they were fashioned by the same artists who have made so many delightful trinkets from the same materials.

It is quite the contrary with regard to small sculptures in stone, wood, ivory, or modeling in wax, clay or metals. In these arts, often called minor ones, the Negroes have shown themselves and still show themselves to be ingenious workers, powerfully helped by a high inspiration, a sharp sense of detail and a very profound conception of the form to be given to their ideas. It is to be remarked that their productions in this domain are generally so much the more original and of surer taste the more we have to do with populations that have been little influenced by exterior forces, whether of Oriental or European origin. In this category, Negro art appears the more perfect in the measure that it is more purely Negro. Indeed it cannot be contested that the funeral statuettes, the sacred masks, the carved seats, the vases, the knick-knacks of bronze or copper, the gold and silver jewelry made in the northern region of the Sudan and in the Europeanized centers are very inferior to the productions of the same order of the tribes of Guinea, of Dahomey, of the Congo and of the Great Lakes.

#### *Portuguese Influence Refuted*

*It has sometimes been claimed that the art industry of bronze, which seems to have reached the pinnacle of its development in the fifteenth century, was of Portuguese inspiration. This opinion seems to me untenable. On the one hand, in fact, there are strong presumptions that this industry already existed long before the first Portuguese vessel touched the coasts of the Gulf of Guinea. On the other hand,*

it is sufficient to examine a collection of the bronzes of Benin in order to be convinced that the inspiration of the artists was frankly Negro: in the manner of arranging the characters, in designing or modeling the contours and the proportions, as well as in the whole of the composition and the choice of the most ordinary motifs of decoration, one finds the same technique, the same conventional stylization, the same conceptions of the picture, the same ornamental processes as in the whole of the productions of Negro art of all times and all parts of tropical Africa. The metal coverings of the doors of the old city of Benin present to us, with more taste and finish, the same scenes as the coffin tops of the Ivory Coast and the Gold Coast and the high-reliefs on the walls of the royal palace of Abomey; the bronze statuettes and masks coming from early Benin are exactly in the same style, although of markedly superior execution, as the majority of wooden statuettes and masks of the Sudan, Guinea, the Congo, and especially the region of the Great Lakes. The four-petaled rose and the disk of turning flames, which ornaments the spaces having no figures in relief, on the door-plates and the metal vases in collections from Benin are found again in identical form in the objects made at different epochs in the various countries of Negro Africa. The ancient art of Benin is only an episode, to be sure the most remarkable, in the history of Negro art.

Portuguese influence appears only in the choice of certain subjects, for example, a missionary with his robe, or a Christian slave kneeling, his hands

clasped, a cross on the breast of his garment, or again a European musketeer with his broad hat, his long mustaches, his coat, boots and his bell-mouthed cannon. These circumstances permit us to date the objects under consideration and authorize us to place them as far back as the fifteenth century. But they are no more proof of a Portuguese influence, both from the point of view of technique and art, than of a French or English influence on the present artisans of the Ivory Coast and the Gold Coast when they use Europeans of their acquaintance as models or, on those of the Gabon or Nigeria, for carving on an elephant tusk a Catholic procession or a government cortège rather than an animist religious ceremony or the turns of a local dance. Can we say that the painting of Fromentin was influenced by African civilization because he liked to take from Africa the subjects of his pictures?

Without doubt, from the end of the fifteenth century to that of the sixteenth, Portuguese influence played an appreciable rôle all along the coasts of Negro Africa. It was introduced by navigators, merchants, missionaries, officers, coming from Europe, and especially, a little later, by freed slaves and half-breeds coming from Brazil and bringing to Africa, together with the sonorous names of their former Portuguese masters, new knowledge and new conceptions. This influence made itself felt in the administrative and military organization of certain kingdoms, such as that of the Congo, and in the court ceremonial of several native sovereigns, such as that of the king of Ardra. But it had little effect

on social institutions and no other in the domain of art than to furnish fresh subjects for pictures, not inspiration.

### *Human Figures and Gods*

In order to appreciate properly the artistic value of the various objects above mentioned, it is indispensable to distinguish from the others those having human figures, that is to say, the statuettes and masks, as well as ivory tusks, metal plates, wooden coffers or coffins representing scenes with human beings. When we are in the presence of those men or women on bended knees, whose limbs are singularly short with respect to the length of the trunk, and with enormous heads, or those masks with terrifying or hideous expressions, we can hardly prevent the impression that these representations are grotesque and have no artistic character.

It is evident that this impression would be justified if these objects were the work of Europeans of modern times, for there would be too violent an antithesis between the normal conceptions of the artist and the style of the object produced by his hands. Art is not really art unless it corresponds, in its expression as in its inspiration, to the civilization of which it is, so to say, the sublimated product. But we should recall that the artisan who has sculptured these statuettes had in view the representation not of living beings but of the deified dead; that the one who imagined these masks thought to express by them the symbol of a redoubtable divinity to those who are not initiated into its mysteries: both are

believers, comparable to the anonymous artists to whom our old Gothic cathedrals owe those extraordinary gargoyles, those grimacing heads of demons, those statues of saints or the dead conventionalized in hieratical and formal attitudes. Neither one nor the other have worked to reproduce, with the utmost flattery, the traits of a human model: they have sculptured gods—or devils—and not men, and they have sculptured these gods as they have been represented to their minds by the traditions of their times.

In this respect, the point has sometimes been made—MM. Clouzot and Level have alluded to it—that the general aspect of the Negro statuettes, if it corresponds badly enough to the anatomy of a normal Negro, singularly recalls that of the Negrillos, specimens of whom are still to be found, more or less sparsely scattered about in several regions of central and southern Africa, and who probably may have one time inhabited the whole of what to-day constitutes Negro Africa before its settlement by the Negroes properly speaking. The relative length of the trunk and the excessive dimensions of the head, in particular, are characteristic of this race once very numerous and far-spread but to-day on the road to extinction. In many regions of Africa where Negrillos are now no longer found, the memory of them has persisted among the Negroes, who claim that before their own arrival the occupants of the country were little men with large heads and reddish skin, as mentioned in our first chapter. The Negroes often considered these little men as the first holders

of the ground which they themselves exploit to-day, making of them sort of distant ancestors, deified like their own forbears.

It would not be surprising that the first Negro artists, needing to figure their deified ancestors, adopted as the representative symbol, the approximate type of these Negrillos, living samples of whom they had known or that a still recent tradition might faithfully enough retrace for them. This type, as adopted, has been transmitted down to our time, the religious character of its origin especially helping to keep it from being transformed during the course of centuries.

### *Animal Representations*

As soon as we leave the domain of human representation—or more exactly what appears to us as human representation, but is not so in the eyes of the Negroes—this sort of “incomprehension,” which assails us in spite of ourselves, disappears and we are in a better position to appreciate exactly the artistic value of the productions which are not so far removed from our own conceptions. In truth, *the representations of animals, so numerous in Negro art, are no more imitations of nature than the human figures, and just as often offer anomalies of proportion or an intentionally bizarre or repulsive aspect.* But we are accustomed to chimeras, to dragons and unicorns, we do not find it extraordinary that animals are given a conventional attitude or incongruous attribute, so we are better prepared



to perceive exactly the impression that the artist has brought to life in his work. -

For all the more reason, we have full liberty to admire, without reserve, compositions in which we are tempted to see only the fruit of an imagination gifted in the sense of line and harmony.

. *Industrial Arts*

At the side of religious art or art for art's sake, there is another domain in which the Negroes are past-masters: it is that of the industrial arts, represented by work in clay, wood, iron, copper, gold, leather, and textiles. Ornamented and glazed pottery of all forms and dimensions, finely carved spoons, gongs, staffs of command, low or high stools each one of which is a masterpiece of patience and elegant execution; harmoniously slender paddles, straight or curved knives having handles of wood incrustated with metal, lances with multiple blades of graceful contours, axes for war or parade, small objects in molded or hammered copper; golden jewelry of filigree or made in a mold, rings and bracelets with delicately wrought openwork, cushions, saddles, boots and sheaths in supple leather diversely colored; curious boxes of oryx skin, trays and mats of colored reeds, fabrics of cotton, wool or raffia that are veritable tapestries with motifs as sober as they are varied and of a very sure taste in coloring; silk or cotton embroideries of a singular richness and happy design. All this is beginning to be familiar to us, thanks to the collections brought together in museums or for exhibitions. More than

one of our manufacturers has been inspired by them to produce in Europe new types that are highly appreciated by the public. Even in Africa missionaries are developing these artistic industries among the natives who find, in the exportation of these products of their ingenuity, unlooked-for sources of revenue. Perhaps it is even to be feared that the stimulus of an easier profit may push the Negro artisans to subordinate their own inspiration to the taste of the European buyer and to sacrifice their art to the temptation of mass production.

With regard to certain of these objects, especially those in leather or fabrics of cotton and embroideries, the superiority of the Southern peoples over the Sudanese is no longer apparent. Manifestly it is because we are dealing with industries imported from North Africa, together with their techniques and their motifs of decoration. Sudanese artisans are not more highly gifted in this domain than, in the others with respect to their congeners of the South, but they have received knowledge of which the latter are still ignorant.

### *Architecture*

The same observation can be made with regard to architecture. It is very certain that this art, which is almost unknown to the populations of the Gulf of Guinea or Equatorial Africa, except in its ornamental branch, has reached a remarkable development in the Sudanese zone. Nevertheless, it does not show its full richness except among Islamized populations and, as we have seen above, the archi-

teatural style of the Sudan, although in the course of time it has taken on a distinctly local character, is of Arabo-Berber origin. It does not on this account furnish a less striking proof of the artistic faculties of the Negroes, since they have been able to produce such brilliant results after seeing only a few models in a field for which their traditions had in nowise prepared them.

### *Music*

In this brief review of the arts having a place of honor among the Negroes we must not forget music. In France when we speak of Negro music we immediately evoke the diabolical harmonies and cacophony of a jazz-band. Now nothing less resembles the music of the Negroes, at least the Negro music of Africa, than the music of the jazz-band. I do not know from what source the latter is derived, but it is certainly not from Africa. In truth, it may, as far as the sound of certain of its instruments are concerned and the remarkable precision with which it furnishes the rhythm for the steps of the dancers, recall, to a certain degree, those orchestras of drums, rattles, iron rods struck against each other and horns or oliphants, to which Europeans give the significant name of tom-toms and which, in sunlight or moonlight, accompanied by the clapping of hands and cries, stimulate the movements of the men and women dancers. But the tom-tom is not music, it is only the instrument of the dance. Upon reflection, I think that the jazz-band is nothing else than that,

and it is doubtless for this reason that it is related to the tom-tom of the Negroes.

Those who play the drum or blow a horn are no more considered within the category of musicians in Africa than they are in Europe and it is a great mistake to think that we may judge Negro music according to the noises, assuredly in very fine rhythm but hardly melodious, of the tom-tom.

The real instruments of African Negro music are the xylophone, called "balafon" by the French, sometimes with, sometimes without resonance boxes made of calabashes, a whole series of violins, guitars, zithers and harps, and various sorts of flutes and flageolets. The most universally used is the xylophone, giving two or three octaves of sounds which are not at all disagreeable. Many xylophone players are real virtuosos. Sometimes they are associated in groups, one of them improvising the recitative and the others taking up the refrain or the leit-motif, each doing his own part. The harpists, too, obtain very harmonious effects.

This music is ordinarily accompanied by singing, the words and the air being composed at the same time by the musician. Often the women sing, without the accompaniment of any instrument, songs that they remember or that they themselves have made up. The men, unless they belong to the caste of musicians, rarely sing; at least seldom for the simple pleasure of recreation, reserving their voices for religious ceremonies or war parties or training themselves to paddle or use a steering-pole during navigation.

Whether the singers be men or women, professional or amateur, the voices and the ears are always remarkable for their true pitch; it is extremely rare that a false note is heard and, if it does occur, it is immediately covered by the hooting of the other singers or simply of the auditors. Whether the choruses are executed in unison or in parts, the harmony is generally impeccable. As for the melodies themselves, many are mediocre, but the majority have a charm to which European ears are as sensitive as African, a charm imprinted with sweetness and melancholy much oftener than with gayety, sometimes with force and with pride in the war-songs and the odes praising a famous hero.

The only reproach that could be made of these melodies is that they are too short: each one is generally composed of a very brief musical phrase which is repeated over and over, twenty or thirty times. This phrase is often delightful, but we are quickly satiated with the most exquisite things. The Negroes, on the contrary, seem to experience a real pleasure in endlessly repeating or hearing the same air, as in intoxicating themselves with the same liquor, while we like to vary our wines.

## CHAPTER XV

### NEGRO LITERATURE

NATIVE LITERATURE IN ARABIC—WRITTEN LITERATURE IN NATIVE TONGUES—"GRIOTS" OR LIVING ENCYCLOPEDIAS—POPULAR ORAL LITERATURE—ORIGIN OF POPULAR THEMES—GENIUS FOR STORY-TELLING—MORAL TALES

It would not be rigorously exact to say that the Negroes possess only an oral literature and that this literature is necessarily of the so-called popular type. Without doubt it is the popular oral literature that has the dominating place in Negro Africa, but we also find there a learned oral literature and a written literature.

The latter manifests itself particularly under the cover of Arabic, known by very few Negroes as a spoken language, but serving as the written language for the majority of the educated Mussulman Negroes. Proportionally, their number is much greater than is usually imagined. For the most part, it is true, they do not use Arabic except in correspondence among themselves, and their epistolary style, though generally florid, does not merit consideration as a literary form, although certain series of letters exchanged between such personages as the *askia* Mamadu Touré and the Algerian reformer El-Meghili, or the Tukulor conqueror El-Hadj Omar and the Fulani king Hamadu-Hamadu, deserve to be pointed out as models of dialectic and scholastic

subtlety. But a great many Mussulman Negroes of tropical Africa have composed and still compose, in a correct and sometimes elegant Arabic, works of theology, hagiology, law, history, sometimes in prose, sometimes in verse, sometimes in prose mixed with verse.

I have spoken above of the intellectual flowering that distinguished Timbuktu in the sixteenth century, but this epoch and this city did not have the monopoly of such literature. Even in our days, the "marabouts," as the educated Mussulmans are commonly called in Africa, edit chronicles of local history that are often highly interesting, treatises on exegesis and learned works that constitute a veritable literature, some examples of which would not detract from Arabic literature as a whole.

Among other observations which must be made in this regard, there is one that is singularly striking. For all Negro writers Arabic is a foreign language; they can only learn it by practice as they possess no grammars except those written in Arabic, *nor any dictionaries giving the Arabic translation* of the words of their mother tongues. So, in order to assimilate the Arabic language to the point of sufficient familiarity for the interpretation of their own concepts, they require a considerable intellectual effort, far superior to that necessary for a European to arrive at the same result, since the latter has grammars and dictionaries edited in his own tongue. This is all to the honor of the intellectual faculties of the Negro race.

There also exist, in much more recent times, em-

bryos of written literature in one or the other of the languages of the European nations who possess colonies in Negro Africa.

*Written Literature in Native Tongue*

Finally, there is another category of written literature, more interesting perhaps from the point of view of the information it can furnish regarding the congenital aptitudes of the Negroes, because it is native in its expression. In certain regions of Africa, the signs of the Arabic alphabet, adapted sometimes, by means of added diacritical marks and new conventions, to the representation of vowel or consonant sounds that do not exist in Arabic, are employed for writing such and such an African Negro language.

At other times, it is not an alphabet borrowed from a foreign language, but a graphic system of local invention, which serves to represent the sounds. In truth, this procedure is not widespread. Up to the present it has not been met with except among the Vai at the frontier of Liberia and Sierra-Leone, who use, for probably more than a century already, a syllabic form of writing of their own invention; among the Bamom or Bamoun of the Cameroons who use a system thought out about the year 1900 by Njoya, king of Foumban, a system at first ideographic, but rapidly becoming phonetic and at present tending to pass from the syllabic to an alphabetic stage; finally among the Nubians of the districts of Korosko and Mahas, who according to the English author H. A. MacMichael, use a special



alphabet, more or less directly derived from an oriental writing.

It would be desirable to possess a certain number of specimens of productions written by means of this purely native process. As a matter of fact we know very few of them aside from some letters and edicts of the king Njoya, which are without literary interest. Nevertheless, it is certain that there exist, in the Vai language and writing, sort of novels or tales that are passed from hand to hand in the villages.<sup>1</sup>

*"Griots" or Living Encyclopedias*

Far more widespread and representative of the native civilization is the unwritten learned literature. Perhaps the epithet of "professional" would be a more suitable designation than "learned." It is, in fact, the appanage of the people belonging to one of the castes or corporations of intellectual workers that we generally include under the term of "griots." There are all categories of griots: some are musicians, singers, poets, story-tellers, mimes, dancers, mountebanks; others have the task of learning by memory the genealogies of noble families, the important facts relating to great personages, the annals of States or of tribes, political, juridical or social customs, religious beliefs, and their transmission to the next generation. This is the oral literature in its learned form.

Each one of these men is a veritable living dic-

<sup>1</sup> During a sojourn in Liberia from 1897 to 1899, I had personally gathered several manuscripts in the Vai language and characters. Unfortunately all were destroyed soon after in the course of a fire and since then I have not had occasion to procure others.

tionary whom the prince, the magistrate, or the priest consults when he is embarrassed on a point of history, of law or of liturgy. It is their knowledge that contributes to the summary education of youth during its initiation into adult life. This curious and eminently rich form of oral literature has been fruitfully utilized by several European authors who have had some of these professionals dictate to them some of the abundant recitals that are so full of precise and detailed information. It is in this manner that M. A. LeHérissé has worked to retrace the ancient history of Dahomey, M. Ch. Monteil to describe the Bambara kingdoms of Segu and Kaarta, the late Dr. Cremer for reconstituting the common law of the Bobo. It is thanks to these traditionalist griots that we possess some light on the distant annals of numerous native States, such as the empire of Ghana, known to the Negroes by the name of the empire of Wagadu or Kumbi, the empire of Mali or Manding, the kingdoms of Diara, of Soso, of the Tekrur, etc. Certain of those chronicles written in Arabic by Sudanese authors are simply compilations and translations of the accounts given by these griots.

In truth, such a proceeding presents serious drawbacks. In spite of a naturally excellent memory fortified by practice, gaps and confusions naturally arise in the minds of those obliged to store up in this way so many names and facts. It happens that an annalist griot attributes to one prince actions that were in reality accomplished by another, or gives as the direct successor of a certain king, a

personage who was not born till a century after the death of his so-called immediate predecessor. These oversights and errors are all the more abundantly met with the more distant are the epochs or the events, since many generations are necessary for the transmission of the story. Nevertheless, as there are generally several griots concurrently charged with the same task, it is possible, by consulting them in turn, to check up statements and arrive, if not at certitude, at least at a satisfactory approximation.

It is also natural, especially for very old events, that legend, which strikes the imagination more profoundly, should be better remembered than history and that in the end it should predominate in the recitals of the traditionalists. Most of the time, however, it is not extremely difficult to separate out the truth which is dissimulated under the symbols of a fantastic appearance. Thus, when the traditions reported by the griots speak of showers of gold that the sacred serpent of Kumbi caused to fall over Wagadu, we immediately think of the prosperity that the exploitation of the gold mines of the Upper Senegal and the Falémé brought to the empire of Ghana before the introduction of Islamism, a prosperity described by Arab writers of the Middle Ages. The cessation of these showers of gold and even of ordinary rain, together with the misery and famine that resulted therefrom, the dispersion of the inhabitants and the breaking up of the kingdom, attributed by the legend to the killing of the sacred serpent, are easily interpreted by the ruin

that the Almoravide conquest brought to the country in falling upon paganism and by the progressive drying up of the sub-Saharan regions.

In any case, it is great good fortune for science that, in the countries generally devoid of the aid of writing, there exists such an institution, thanks to which the important facts of history, the origins of tribes, the details of customs and beliefs have been preserved in the memory of man. And it is curious to note that peoples reputed to be ignorant and barbarous have found a means to take the place of libraries by supporting amongst themselves successive generations of living books, each one of which adds to the heritage it has received from the precedent. These so-called savages have at their call, historical comperdiums and codes just as we have, only it is in the cerebral convolutions of their traditionalist griots, and not on paper, that their annals and their laws are imprinted.

### *Popular Oral Literature*

As for the popular oral literature, properly speaking, it is extremely rich and constantly being renewed. It also has its professionals, the griots who are singers, poets, narrators, mimes, and mountebanks as above mentioned. It has equally its amateurs, for many Negroes of both sexes, without belonging to a special caste, retell, with modifications, the fables that they have heard from the griots or even make up new ones.

This popular literature includes several types: supernatural tales, moral tales, comic stories, prov-

erbs, riddles, epic poems, satires, love songs, funeral homilies, drama or farce, and still others that I have forgotten or that I would be unable to classify. In many of these compositions, moreover, several types are interwoven; no one better than the Negro storyteller knows how to pass from the humorous to the severe with naturalness and ease.

### *Origin of Popular Themes*

Among the supernatural tales that are current from the southern limits of the Sahara to the Cape of Good Hope, there are certainly a considerable number that are not of Negro or even of African invention, that have been imported by the Arabs or drawn from the original by some Sudanese scholar in a collection of the *Thousand and One Nights* or some other oriental work. Sometimes they have been modified: the tiger becomes a leopard, the beautiful princess with lily complexion is transformed into a Negro woman, the palace of multi-colored faïence a modest hut; but they can be recognized just the same.

There are other stories that recall at the same time the folklore of the Orient and that of the Occident. This is the case with many of the moral or satirical tales, of numerous fables with animal personages. I will not lose time in trying to find out if these themes come from an old Hindu or Iranian source, from where they have spread over the entire world, or if they are simply the multiple and simultaneous product of the human imagination, which is not inexhaustible and must inevitably repeat

itself, unconsciously, under all latitudes. Furthermore, whatever be the first origin of the themes, imitation, inspiration or invention, it can have only a secondary importance for those who are content to study the mentality of a people across the transparent veil of its literature.

*Genius for Story-Telling*

Only, if we wish to get at the meat of these accounts and narratives they must not be read in an interpretation that is more or less corrupted by the mentality of the European translator, but they must be heard as they are told by the Negroes themselves in one of their numerous and expressive languages, and especially by a professional, with the addition of a tone and mimicry that only figures in the text implicitly. A fable that seems insipid enough to the reader, may be a masterpiece of the imagination, of malice or of good sense. Another tale which seems at the reading banal or incomprehensible, brings forth laughter and tears alternately in those who hear it recounted and arouses the liveliest interest in the audience at the same time that they admirably seize the connections and the moral.

Doubtless there is a mutual comprehension when the narrator and the audience belong to the same race and speak and understand the same tongue, while the European will always find a veil, more or less thick or more or less tenuous, between his faculties of mental receptivity and the story that is told by the Negro. However, there is a considerable dif-

ference between the effect produced on this European by the reading of even a very good translation and the hearing of the original, even if recited in a language that he understands only imperfectly. Pantomime has no country, and the play of the physiognomy of the Negro story-tellers is such that their thought may be seized even if no words were used to express it.

I will not speak here of the literary style, properly speaking, of these popular productions. It varies enormously according to the talent of the speakers, attaining its perfection only among a few professionals who are justly renowned. A stranger, in any case, would have much trouble in appreciating it. What is less difficult for us to perceive in these tales, fables, proverbs, poems or sketches of comedies, are the sentiments that they reveal and the ideas which are presented.

The Negro's affection for the supernatural displays itself complacently, at the same time as their propensity to find natural what, for us only, is supernatural. Their imagination in this respect, though less fecund in colorful descriptions than that of the Orientals, is inexhaustible. The lack of probability does not seem to interest them. At most, when a conclusion may be too strange a result of the premises, a parenthesis furnishes the necessary explanations briefly and the auditors are satisfied.

### *Moral Tales*

I have spoken of moral tales. I mean by this, stories that teach a moral. They may seem to us

immoral, but that is another affair. It is certain, for example, that the number of fables exalting cunning, as the means put at the disposition of the weak for triumphing over the powerful, is considerable. The heroes of these fables vary according to the countries: in the Sudan, it is generally the hare; on the Guinea coast it is often a little antelope; on the lower Niger, usually a turtle; elsewhere a spider. The others present in emulation of each other, the stupid hyena and the simple-minded elephant. But it must be remarked that the crafty personage of the tales, though his success arouses laughter, is never given a sympathetic character in Negro fables except when he employs his trickery for a good cause or uses it against the wicked, the deceitful, the cowardly or the miser, or at least when his slyness is not accompanied by malice. The hare is the prototype of trickery that is fine, benevolent, the righter of wrongs; the adventures in which he figures always turn out to his advantage. The spider, on the contrary, who lets his intelligence and his cunning serve for the gratification of his lower instincts, his mean vengeance, his cupidity and pride, finishes by being duped in his turn, to the great joy of the public who applaud his undoing.

Among the faults that are oftenest and the most rudely turned to ridicule or chastised in the popular literature of the Negroes are foolishness, self-sufficiency, avarice, forgetting one's duties to the family or the duties of hospitality, bad breeding. The contrary virtues, especially generosity, are constantly exalted and recompensed.



Proverbs and common sayings abound among the Negroes and their discourse is frequently embellished with them in current conversation as well as in the most serious conferences. Thousands of them have been collected in all regions of tropical Africa. The most wholesome good sense emanates from these short and expressive maxims, in which an often very profound thought is condensed into a striking comparison or a cutting answer. André Demaison, in his *Diato*, has introduced many of these Negro proverbs, whose savor contributes not a little to the originality of his novel.

The contempt for those who want to elevate themselves above their position or who do not conform to established customs is frequently expressed in these maxims, as in the following:

“A piece of wood may remain ten years in the water, it will never become a crocodile.”

“The young goat will browse on the leaf of the plant that nourished its mother.”

Sometimes the most elevated sentiments are met with in a simple form which increases their force, for example in the Tukulor saying:

“What the laborer sees when he straightens himself is the village. It is not the desire to eat that is the cause of this, it is the entire past that draws him to this side.”

What more lovely definition could be given of the sentiment of a fatherland? Do we expect to find it in the popular literature of a Negro people?

## CHAPTER XVI

### EVALUATIONS

#### SO-CALLED INTELLECTUAL INFERIORITY OF THE NEGROES —ISOLATION AS A CAUSE OF RETARDATION<sup>1</sup>

##### *So-called Intellectual InferiORITY of the Negroes*

Do the African Negroes form a race intellectually inferior to the other human races? This has often been affirmed but without ever giving convincing proof of it and generally a false point of departure is taken.

It has been said that the Negroes are at present inferior in respect of intellectual development to other types of humanity. It seems to me that in saying this, "ignorance" has been confounded with "lack of intelligence." The greatest genius of the world, if he had never been to school and had lived only in the midst of savages, would have been without any doubt, under the complete impossibility of manifesting his high natural intelligence, which would not mean that he did not possess it.

But, it is added, the African Negroes have received education and have been placed in a highly developed intellectual environment and just the same they have done nothing to show this intelligence. To this it may be answered, first, that certain of them have given very satisfactory results, and then

<sup>1</sup> For fuller discussion see M. Delafosse, *Les Nègres*.

that if the number of these has been limited, it is that there has been too great a difference between the environment whence came the subjects that were to be educated and the environment into which they found themselves brusquely transplanted: to resist the shock and not destroy the brain, it would have been necessary to have the intelligence of the élite—and doubtless this was the case with the former—or else avoid the dangerous jolt by refusing to allow oneself to be broken in—and such was the case with the majority. I will add that particular examples should not constitute a general rule.

To judge properly of the intellectual capacities of a population *en bloc*, this population must be followed in the normal evolution of its mass and not by taking a few individuals, more or less happily chosen, and transporting them into a world so far removed from their own that they can only play the part of the uprooted and, like all uprooted plants, waste away and perish, except under very exceptional circumstances.

Now, the Negroes of Africa have had this grievous mischance of not being able to evolve as the other great human races have, without its being in the least their fault. While, during many centuries the descendants of the Gauls, our ancestors, were in constant contact with populations more evolved or otherwise evolved than themselves, but with a civilization contemporary to theirs, and were able, by taking from some and getting inspiration from others, to become modern Frenchmen, the unfortunate Negroes were almost isolated from the rest of

humanity. If the whites of North Africa have succeeded in reaching them in spite of the Saharan barrier, it has hardly been more than to bring into captivity thousands and thousands among them or to impose upon them by the sword a dogma that they did not even take the trouble to explain. If later, other whites have penetrated further among them, in spite of that other obstacle constituted by the maritime bar, it was first to tear away, anew, thousands of slaves, then to inundate them with alcohol, and finally, without preparation, to thrust a civilization of the nineteenth century in the midst of other civilizations which had remained contemporaneous with Charlemagne and even Attila. Under conditions such as these, the Negroes have been able to borrow the culture of cotton from the Semites and the use of powder from the Europeans but what could they gain from the intellectual point of view?

*Isolation as a Cause of Retardation*

The African Negroes offer this spectacle, without doubt unique in the world, of an entire race who never were able to count upon any one but themselves for progress, having received nothing from the outside world, or having received as many ferments of retrogression as elements of progress, if not more. Would we have done better in the same situation?

*When peoples placed under such conditions have been able, with only their own resources, to organize States like those whose history I have tried to retrace here; to constitute and maintain centers*

of study like Timbuktu, for example; to produce statesmen like the *mansa* Gongo-Mussa or the *askia* Mohammed, or even conquerors like Ousman-dan-Fodio or El-Hadj-Omar, savants and scholars who have succeeded without the aid of dictionaries or of any sort of vehicular language to gain a sufficient command of Arabic in order to understand it at sight and write it correctly; to form languages whose suppleness, richness and precision astonish all those who study them, languages which could, by the simple, normal play of their morphological laws and without foreign interpolations, furnish the necessary instrument to those who speak them, if these people should happen to make in one day a forward leap of fifteen or twenty centuries; to invent completely, as was done about a hundred years ago by the Vai of the Grain Coast and more recently by the Bamoun of the Cameroons, a perfectly viable system of writing, it must indeed be admitted that these peoples do not merit treatment as inferiors from the intellectual point of view.

Aside from this it is impossible not to recognize that the African Negroes are remarkably gifted from the point of view of the arts. Their innate musical disposition, the instruments that they have known how to create and from which they are often able to obtain surprising melodies, their recitative chants and poetic improvisations, the elegance of the jewelry and the potteries which they manufacture and of certain of their sculptures on wood and on ivory, the design and the color of their mats and tissues, the good taste of their talent for ornamenta-

tion are the incontestable proofs of artistic faculties which are called upon to give forth more and better than they have been able to do up to the present.

The isolation in which natural barriers have for too long a time closed their habitat has made of the African Negroes, in relation to the more favored Europeans, backward peoples, or more exactly, retarded peoples: they have lost much time and they will not be able to catch up in a day or in a century. But they have certainly not said their last word and their history is not finished. Perhaps it is only beginning and this book is only a preface.

# CHAPTER XVI

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